Table of Contents

1. Allegiances
2. Chapter One
3. Chapter Two
4. Chapter Three
5. Chapter Four
6. Chapter Five
7. Chapter Six
8. Chapter Seven
9. Chapter Eight
10. Chapter Nine
11. Chapter Ten
12. Chapter Eleven
13. Chapter Twelve
14. Chapter Thirteen
15. Chapter Fourteen
16. Chapter Fifteen
17. Chapter Sixteen
18. Chapter Seventeen
19. Chapter Eighteen
20. Chapter Nineteen
21. Chapter Twenty
22. Chapter Twenty One
23. Chapter Twenty Two
24. Chapter Twenty Three
25. Chapter Twenty Four
26. Chapter Twenty Five
27. Chapter Twenty Six

Allegiances

Note: This is the allegiances at the start of the book

Also, you may have known the Clans as SpringClan, AutumnClan, WinterClan and SummerClan but I have changed their names so now there is LeafClan (SpringClan), BarkClan (AutumnClan), BlizzardClan (WinterClan) and SunClan (SummerClan)

LeafClan:

LEADER: Maplestar (Long-haired dark ginger tom with amber eyes) *Mate:* Silversong || *Kits:* None || *Apprentice:* Birdpaw

DEPUTY: Whiskerheart (Grey tabby tom with blue eyes) *Mate:* None || *Kits:* None

MEDICINE CATS: Chiveleaf (Cream she-cat with green eyes) *Mate:* None || *Kits:* None

Flowerstem (Brown and white she-cat with green eyes) *Mate:* None || *Kits:* None || *Littermate:* Petalsplash

WARRIORS: Stagleap (Brown tabby tom with yellow eyes) *Mate:* Moonflower || *Kits:* Emberpaw, Windpaw and Birdpaw

Grassbreeze (Fluffy musty-grey she-cat with green eyes) *Littermate:* Vineleap

Vineleap (Musty-brown tom with green eyes) *Littermate:* Grassbreeze

Ashflake (Dark grey and white spotted tom with blue eyes) *Littermate:* Cloudspot

Cloudspot (Grey and white spotted tom with pale blue eyes) *Littermate:* Ashflake

Moonflower (Black and white she-cat with vibrant blue eyes) *Mate:*

Stagleap || *Kits:* Birdpaw, Windpaw and Emberpaw

Foxleap (Ginger tom with amber eyes)

Sparkclaw (Ginger tom with amber eyes) *Apprentice:* Emberpaw

Mothleap (Very pale grey tom with pale blue eyes)

Stripecloud (Grey tabby tom with blue eyes) *Littermates:* Stormwind and Shadeleaf

Shadeleaf (Musty grey tom with green eyes) *Littermates:* Stormwind and Stripecloud

Stormwind (Fluffy grey she-cat with pale green eyes) *Littermates:* Stripecloud and Shadeleaf

Lilysong (Calico she-cat with brown eyes)

Petalsplash (Black and white she-cat with green eyes) *Littermate:* Flowerstem || *Apprentices:* Honeypaw

Stalkcloud (White tom with grey tabby stripes and brown eyes) *Apprentice:* Dewpaw

Barkheart (Brown tabby tom with yellow eyes)

Seedspot (White she-cat with ginger spots and green eyes) *Apprentice:* Windpaw

APPRENTICES: Dewpaw (Cream tom with green eyes) *Mentor:* Stalkcloud || *Littermate:* Honeypaw

Honeypaw (Cream she-cat with hazel eyes) *Mentor:* Petalsplash || *Littermate:* Dewpaw

Windpaw (Black and white tom with vibrant blue eyes) *Mentor:* Seedspot || *Littermates:* Emberpaw and Birdpaw

Emberpaw (Dark ginger tom with amber eyes) *Mentor:* Sparkclaw || *Littermates:* Windpaw and Birdpaw

Birdpaw (Calico she-cat with blue eyes) *Mentor:* Whiskerstar ||

Littermates: Windpaw and Emberpaw

QUEENS/KITS: Silversong (Silver she-cat with blue eyes ; expecting Maplestar's kits)

|||||

I am just going to do SpringClan's Allegiances because they are the main Clan.

- SkyandStarlight

Chapter One

Hi there readers! SkyandStarlight here! Thanks for visiting this book, trust me, there are great adventures.

- SkyandStarlight

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Butterflies flew around inside Birdkit's tiny white belly as she groomed her brown and black patchy pelt until it was smooth and shining in the sun-high light that was weaving its way through the ivy hanging limply at nursery entry.

"*I have to look my best,"* the kit told herself, spitting out the annoying furs that clung to her small, pink tongue, "*this is my big day. I will never be able to have it again, so I must go out into that and look the best I possibly can."* The she-kit kept telling herself that she would go fine in her apprentice ceremony, but a little voice in the back of her head made her think about all the things that could go wrong. She had been trying to shake off the annoying voice all day, but it was like a stubborn burr in her pelt, not wanting to go away.

"*Everything will be okay,"* she told herself, taking a deep breath. She shook her patchy coloured head in an attempt to clear the worrying thoughts, but it just gave her a small headache.

"How are you going?" asked a voice and Birdkit looked up from her grooming to see a cream tabby tom walk into the nursery. His fur was short and pale, and it shined in the sunlight, causing him look like a cat from StarClan. His eyes were a pale green, like the colour of grass, and they sparkled with kindness and a slight bit of humour.

"I am just a little nervous," sighed Birdkit, looking down at her black paws and shuffling them on the sandy ground, butterflies still flying hectic loops in her stomach. She was embarrassed at telling

another cat about how she felt, and even though she had known this tom ever since she opened her eyes, she was soon going to be a warrior cat apprentice. She was sure that other apprentices didn't show their emotions and constantly spill out how they felt to other cats.

"Don't be," smiled the tom, walking and sitting down next to her, his cream tail flicking over the dusty ground, stirring up dead leaves and scraggly moss, "you don't have to do much at all, just listen to what the leader says and say you want to be an apprentice."

"I know!" cried the young kit, "but it is so simple that I am sure I am going to mess it up!" She looked at the tom with desperation in her pale blue eyes. She desperately wanted to be well respected by her Clan and not be laughed at because she was hopeless, just like a mouse under a cat's claws.

"You will not mess it up," promised the tom, talking to her in a soothing voice with his tail running over her back. He was so kind and sympathetic; most cats could not be bothered to comfort a distressed kit.

"Oh Dewpaw," sighed Birdkit, looking away and down at the ground "I just want to be the best warrior I can be. I don't want to make a fool of myself in front of the whole clan. I want them to see that I am a good hunter, that I can defend my clan, that I am responsible, that-"

"Birdkit," the tom interrupted, talking to her in a stern voice, causing the kit to look up at him, "you will be all of those things, you just need to believe in yourself and not worry so much about what might go wrong."

He looked her directly in her blue eyes and for those few moments, she swore she could see something else glimmering in his kind green eyes, but he pulled away before she could ponder about it anymore. He gave her a nod and walked towards the den entry, looking over his cream shoulder once before walking out of the den.

"*You just need to believe in yourself,"* Dewpaw's voice echoed inside her head, and she breathed in a deep breath. He was right, she

needed to stop doubting herself or she was certain to fail, and that was definitely something she didn't want. She began grooming again but was quickly interrupted as a brown tabby tom walked into the nursery.

"Are you ready?" he asked, walking over to her, "your littermates are waiting for you and Maplestar is ready to start the ceremony." The tom flicked his tail impatiently as he stood waiting, a few fox lengths from where the tortoiseshell and white she-kit sat. He looked like he was trying to control his impatience, but was failing, his scent and body language a clear give away.

"Oh!" cried Birdkit, jumping up in surprise, "Sorry Stagleap, I didn't even realize!" She wished that Dewpaw or someone had told her that the leader and whole clan were waiting.

"*Great way to make a fool of yourself already!"* she thought, picking out one final leaf in her pelt before she followed her father towards the exit of the den. The kit shook her head, trying to clear away the negative thoughts as she walked out of the nursery and into the bright sunlight.

Edited: 30th of October 2021

Chapter Two

The whole Clan was there, waiting in the LeafClan clearing, causing a rainbow of different pelt colours, from black, ginger and tabby to brown, cream and white. Birdkit saw her two brothers, Windkit and Emberkit, sitting over to one side of the crowd and she hurried of to join them, the whole Clan watching her.

"What took you so long?" hissed Emberkit, fluffing up his dark ginger in frustration, clearly taking no pride in his appearance, "The whole Clan has been waiting for you!" Birdkit muttered an apology, licking her white chest fur in embarrassment as Maplestar, the Clan leader, stood up from his spot on the Highrock, grabbing the attention of the whole Clan.

"Today we gather to celebrate the apprentice ceremony of Windkit, Emberkit and Birdkit." The dark ginger tom stood tall on the Highrock, and the tortoiseshell and white kit suppressed a burst of excitement as he said her name. She was finally becoming an apprentice! The kit looked over at her brothers and saw their fur also tingling with excitement, Emberkit's annoyance at his sister gone. She turned back to face Maplestar and listened intently as he continued to address the whole clan.

"These three kits have reached the age of six moons and have proved themselves worthy enough to become apprentices of this Clan. So, Emberkit, Windkit and Birdkit, please come forward." The tortoiseshell and white she-kit took a deep breath and walked forward to the leader, staying behind her brothers. The crowd of cats in front of them parted, some whispering to each other, but they were too quiet for her to make out what they were saying.

"*What have I done wrong?"* wondered the she-kit as she and her littermates walked towards the Highrock. She kept looking over her shoulder, but whenever she met someone's gaze, they quickly looked away. She hoped she didn't look bad, or she had done something wrong already. Their whispering was not helping her nerves, but she tried to shake it off. There was no time to ponder

about it. Her brothers were already halfway to where Maplestar had jumped down from the Highrock and she quickly hurried after them.

"Windkit," continued Maplestar once the three kits reached him, "please step forward." Birdkit tingled with excitement as Maplestar swung his huge, fluffy ginger neck over to Windkit, whose black fur was fluffed up with enthusiasm. The kit ducked his head for a few heartbeats and quickly licked his white chest fur, squirming under the leader's gaze, before he stepped forward.

"Windkit," rumbled the ginger tom, "do you promise to learn the ways of the warrior code by training as an apprentice and being taught by a warrior?"

"I do," responded the kit, gazing up at Maplestar with big green eyes that were dancing with excitement and nervousness.

"Then, Windkit, from this moment on, you shall be known as Windpaw. Your mentor shall be Seedspot." All eyes turned onto the ginger she-cat with white spots as she stepped forward to touch noses with her new apprentice.

"*At least he got a nice mentor,"* thought Birdkit as she watched her brother walk back into the crowd, flanking his mentor. Seedspot was only a young warrior, but she was a good hunter and really nice. The two were a good match.

"Emberkit," meowed Maplestar, grabbing the tortoiseshell and white kit's attention again as the leader moved onto the second kit, "do you promise to train as a warrior cat apprentice and learn the ways of the warrior code?"

"I do," replied the dark ginger kit, looking like a mini version of Maplestar as he stood determinedly.

"Then Emberkit, from this moment on, you shall be known as Emberpaw. Your mentor will be Sparkclaw."

"*Oof, a bit harsh!"* winced Birdkit, looking at the ginger warrior who was walking out of the crowd to his new apprentice. Sparkclaw was

strict, bossy, and got angry easily, plus he hated young cats. The tortoiseshell and white kit hoped her brother would be okay with his new mentor, and that both wouldn't end up with shredded pelts by the end of the day.

"Birdkit," said Maplestar, looking down at her, his amber eyes steady as the kit looked up at him, "do you promise to learn the ways of warrior code by becoming an apprentice?" She took a deep breath and looked up at her leader.

"I do," she replied, excitement fizzing though her, the calming breaths not doing much.

"Then Birdkit, from this moment on you shall be known as Birdpaw. I will mentor you."

The kit suppressed a gasp, the leader mentoring her? She fluffed out her fur as the cats in the Clan started murmuring and whispering among themselves, clearly they thought that it was unusual for the leader to take an apprentice. Birdpaw shook her fur and touched noses with her new mentor, her heart still beating fast, but the butterflies were starting to die out, replaced with a surprised feeling. She could not process that the leader was going to be her mentor! She would have to be the luckiest apprentice in the whole clan!

Maplestar signaled the end of the meeting and walked away from the clearing, not even telling his apprentice to come. Birdpaw stood for a couple of heartbeats before she walked over to her parents and her littermates, purring and rubbing heads with them.

"You did so well!" meowed her mother, Moonflower, licking her daughter shoulder, "I am proud of you all." The three kits purred and crowded around their mother and father.

"I can't believe I got Sparkclaw!" complained Emberpaw, pulling away from his parents.

"Don't complain Emberpaw," Stagleap said, scolding his son, "would you rather a badger as your mentor?"

"No," mumbled the dark ginger apprentice, "but...."

Birdpaw tuned her head around as a flash of ginger caught her gaze and she saw her mentor emerge from the medicine cat den; his fur brushed up is an agitated way. He swung his head around until his amber eyes fell on his apprentice. He waved his tail, beckoning for her to come before walking back into the medicine cat den.

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Edited: Tuesday 10th of November 2021

Hey there wonderful readers! Thank you so much for continuing to read this book, your comments mean so much.

So, what was your favourite part in this chapter? Mine would probably have to be when Emberpaw complains about his mentor. What about you?

Please keep commenting, voting and reading!

- SkyandStarlight

Chapter Three

The medicine cat den was dim and only a few rays of sunlight weaved through the ivy dangling at the entrance. There was a strong smell of herbs coming from holes in one of the side walls and it made Birdpaw sneeze. The apprentice squinted her eyes, trying to make out shapes in the almost-darkness, tripping over some sticks in the process. As her eyes slowly adjusted to the darkness, the apprentice made out the shapes of the two medicine cats and her new mentor.

"Hello Birdpaw," said the younger medicine cat, who was light brown with white splashes and kind green eyes.

"Hi Flowerstem," replied the apprentice, looking around the den. Her eyes met the older medicine cat, Chiveleaf and the pale yellow she-cat nodded at the apprentice, her green eyes betraying no emotion.

"So Birdpaw," said Maplestar, his voice low, "do you know why I called you in here?"

"No," replied the apprentice, her pelt prickling with anxiousness, she hoped she had not done anything wrong already!

"Are you sure?" asked Chiveleaf, cocking her head her head. The apprentice nodded, her tongue not wanting to work. She was just praying that she had not done something wrong, and that they were going to be kicked out of the Clan when she had just become an apprentice.

"Have you had any strange dreams lately?" asked Maplestar, amber eyes glowing in the dark.

"No," said the apprentice, her voice so quiet that she could barely hear it. The two medicine cats nodded but Maplestar looked unconvinced.

"Are you telling the truth?" he asked, leaning in close to her. Birdpaw took a step back and nodded, her throat too tight with fear that she couldn't speak.

"Leave her Maplestar," said Chiveleaf, walking forward to the leader, "if she is telling the truth, we will not be able to force anything else out of her." The apprentice looked over at Flowerstem, who gave her a look of sympathy. Maplestar grunted and nodded towards the entrance of the den, signalling for her to leave. Birdpaw didn't need to be told twice and left the den quickly, grateful to be out of the air that was steaming with tension.

She breathed out, sitting down away from the entrance of the den, licking one of her white paw. She stood up again and heading towards the prey pile, grabbed a mouse from the top and settling down in one corner of the camp. She tried to shut out her thoughts about what had happened in the medicine den, but it was very difficult. She took a bite out of the mouse and looked up as her mentor, Maplestar, came storming out of the medicine cat den with his ears pinned against his head and dark ginger fur bristling. The scent of rage was pulsing off him and Birdpaw scrambled back into the shadows of the camp to escape his furious gaze as it swept around the camp. She prayed that he wouldn't see her otherwise she would have to face his anger, which she certainly didn't want to do. Luckily, the dark ginger leader walked out of the camp and into the forest while the whole clan held their breath. A few heartbeats after the leader disappeared into the forest, the clan continued what they had been doing.

Birdpaw took another bite of mouse but she had lost her appetite and buried the remains of it, looking around the camp. She saw Dewpaw pushing through the crowd of cats towards her, and the apprentice slowly walked out of the shadows, making her way to the cream tabby tom.

"See?" he said, "Your apprentice ceremony was not that bad!"

"Yeah," huffed Birdpaw, looking at the camp exit where her mentor had stormed out moments ago "but now my mentor is angry at me for some reason,"

"What is it with you being negative?" Dewpaw asked, huffing as he rolled his eyes.

"I am not being negative," retorted Birdpaw, laying back down on the campground, still looking at the camp exit "I am just telling the truth."

"Whatever," said Dewpaw, sitting down next toher and licking a tough piece of grit between his paws. Birdpaw laid her headon her paws and gazed of into the distance as the midday sun beat down on thecamp.

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Edited Thursday 11th of November 2021

Hey there! What do you think of Chapter Three? Isn't the unspoken relationship between Birdpaw and Dewpaw so exciting?

Please keep commenting, reading and voting! Thing are only just starting to get exciting.

- SkyandStarlight

Chapter Four

For the rest of the afternoon, Birdpaw slept with the cool breeze blowing through her fur and sunlight gently shining down on top of her. It was late afternoon when the apprentice was woken up by a sharp paw poking her and she groggily opened her eyes. She blinked a couple of times, trying to clear her blurred vision, and slowly made out the shape of the grey tabby deputy, Whiskerheart.

"Oh, hi Whiskerheart," yawned Birdpaw sleepily, standing up and shaking dust out of her fur before looking up at the tom.

"Hi Birdpaw," he replied, "Sorry to disrupt you sleep, but I have a favour to ask from you," The apprentice cocked her head to the side and looked at him with puzzlement in her eyes.

"What is it?" she asked, drawing a paw over her ear to wipe away some dust that was still lingering.

"I need you to go find Maplestar and try to get him to come back. I know you are only his new apprentice, but..." the grey tabby tom paused and looked over his shoulder at the camp exit, "but he will listen to you." Birdpaw felt uncertainty grow in her belly, she doubted that the leader would listen to a meek apprentice, but she nodded, not wanting to disappoint her Clanmate and deputy.

"Thank you," meowed the deputy, turning to the Highrock, "just stay safe." The apprentice nodded, watching the deputy bound away to a group of warriors before saying a quick goodbye to a sleepy Dewpaw. She took a deep breath and bounding out of the camp and into the forest.

She could hear birds chirping up high in the trees and mice scuttling among the fallen leaves. It was really tempting to hunt but she knew now was not the time, plus she didn't know any techniques. She needed to find her mentor; he could be in a lot of trouble for all she knew, though she wouldn't really be able to defend him or herself.

Birdpaw skidded to a halt and sniffed the air, trying to see if she could detect any scent of the dark ginger leader or possible dangers. She weaved around the trees, following the faint scent of the leader, and found herself in a clearing, surrounded by dark green shrubs. Tall trees towered over it and created multiple dappled patterns on the dusty floor. Birdpaw turned around but she could not see her mentor anywhere. He had to be here somewhere because this was where his scent had ended.

"Maplestar?" she called out, but the only reply was a robin chirping. A chill went down her spine and her fur started to prick up. It felt like someone was watching her but when she spun around, the sensation disappeared.

"Hello?" the apprentice called again, heart beginning to race "is anyone there?"

This time there was a faint meow from one of the bushes and a lot of rustling. The apprentice spun around to the strange noises and saw a skinny black cat with yellow eyes creep out of the bushes. Then more and more cats poured out of the bushes, all skinny and with sharp, deadly claws. Thy began to surrounding the apprentice and Birdpaw shrunk away as the rouges slid out their claws, hissing at her with sharp teeth.

"Leave her," called out a voice, a very familiar voice. Some cats moved to the side and a dark ginger cat walked out of the shadows with his head held high.

"Maplestar!" she meowed, thankful for the appearance of her new mentor. He could defiantly beat the rogues, no doubt about it. He was way bigger than them for a start, plus these rogue cats were weak and wouldn't last long in a battle.

But as the apprentice looked closer, there was something not right about the dark ginger tom. His eyes were cold, fixed on his new apprentice and he was standing tall, with his tail flicking fiercely.

"Hello Birdpaw," growled the dark ginger tom, his voice like ice, "I see you fell for my trap."

"Your trap?" she repeated, taking a step backwards as a shiver ran down her spine. This was not the Maplestar she knew, or at least the Maplestar who had been just become her mentor.

"Yes," hissed the tom, stepping towards her, "and now I will be able to get the truth out of you. The truth about your power. There are not petty medicine cats around here to help you now!"

"What do you want to know?" asked the apprentice, trembling with fear as she took another step back, coming dangerously close to the ring of rogues around her.

"I know you lied to me in the den before, I could tell." he growled, still coming towards her, "You are the chosen cat, StarClan has told me. There is no way to escape your destiny."

"But I told you the truth before," Birdpaw cried, swinging her head around to try and find a way out, "I am not special! What else do you want to hear?" The ginger tom stalked forward and flicked his tail, the rouges disappearing back into the bushes. He towered over her and pinned his ears against his head, baring his teeth.

"I want to hear the truth," he hissed.

"But I am telling you the truth!" protested the apprentice. Maplestar hissed again and swiped his claws over her nose, splattering the she-cat's blood on the dusty floor.

"No, you are not," he growled, "it is for your own good if I know. It is your destiny, and you have to face it."

"But I am telling you all I know! Why won't you believe me?" Maplestar didn't reply and just raked his claws down her flank. Birdpaw spun around in surprise, she had never fought anyone before! She had no idea what to do. As Maplestar made another move towards her, the apprentice slashed her claws out and grazed his nose.

"You fight like a kittypet," hissed the tom, slashing his claws and drawing blood on her face. Birdpaw shrunk away from him and tried to run, but he rammed into her, and the apprentice fell to the

ground with a thump, all the breath knocked out of her. Maplestar picked her up by the scruff and tossed her across the clearing, acting like she was a bundle of feathers. Birdpaw hit on of the trees and she felt one of the bones in her leg snap.

The apprentice hissed in pain and curled herself into a tight ball, pain pulsing through her. The dark ginger tom stalked over to her and blocked the sunlight around her, teeth drawn as he put his face close to hers. But before the tom could do anything else, a grey shape came bursting out of the bushes and jumped onto Maplestar, dragging him away from the apprentice.

"Whiskerheart!" she whispered as stars began to dance in front of her eyes. All the breath had been driven out of her and she knew she was in no position to help the deputy. She tried to stand up, but her head hurt too much, and she flopped back to the ground, darkness washing over her as the sounds of the two fighting toms slowly faded away.

|||||

Edited: Thursday 11th of November 2021

Chapter Five

"Birdpaw?" came a voice from very far away. She twitched one of her ears and slowly opened her eyes. When the apprentice blinked a couple of times, she saw a glowing grey and white cat standing in front of her and tried to stand up.

"Stay laying down," said the cat, "I don't care. My name is Rainshadow by the way."

"Why are you here?" asked the apprentice, puzzlement clouding her eyes.

"Don't you know?" asked the cat, cocking his head to the side.

"No, this is the first time I have had a visit from a strange cat."

"Well, to simplify it, you are a special cat with a very different destiny to most other cats." Birdpaw looked at the tom, confused, but a memory sparked inside her, this is probably what Maplestar was talking about!

"What does this destiny mean?" asked the apprentice, fear beginning to build up inside her.

"It means you can see cats from StarClan, like me," replied the tom, "and you can also have dreams of the future." Birdpaw paused for a few heartbeats to try and process all of this information.

"But why does it have to be me?" she asked eventually.

"I don't know," admitted Rainshadow, "but you are very lucky to have this happen to you."

"But I don't want this power, I just want to be a normal cat!" whimpered the apprentice.

"But this means that you will be able to protect your clan like nobody else will be able to."

"I don't want this!" wailed Birdpaw, "I have already had one cat try to kill me because of this power!"

"Well," said Rainshadow, rolling his eyes, "you have to deal with it, it will be part of your life and your destiny."

"But my life is in danger because of this stupid power!" complained Birdpaw, sitting up and ignoring the painful throbbing in her head.

"It is not stupid," said Rainshadow, "you have been chosen because you are responsible!"

"But I am just an apprentice, I can't keep my whole Clan safe!"

"I am not saying you have to keep your whole Clan safe now," said the tom, rolling his eyes, "but you will have to at some point."

Birdpaw sighed and looked out of the medicine cat den where the clan was sleeping in the other dens in the camp. She could possibly have their lives in her paws one day. The apprentice turned back to face the StarClan cat but he was starting to fade, the brightness around him dimming, but his voice whispered.

"We will be here to help you," the light faded completely and Birdpaw looked around the den at the two sleeping medicine cats. The only movement from them was their steady breathing and the occasional ear twitch. Birdpaw curled up in her nest, letting out tiny hisses from the pain, and looked out of the den again. She looked up at the night sky and felt her eyes beginning to close. She guessed she would just have to try to be brave and face this destiny of hers.

Chapter Six

Birdpaw groggily opened her eyes as a zesty scent filled her nose, making her wrinkle it in disgust.

"I told you it would work," came a voice and the apprentice recognized it as Chiveleaf. The cream medicine cat was holding a strange purple flowered plant in front of the apprentice's nose while looking at the back of the den. There was a huff, probably from Flowerstem, and the older medicine cat turned back to Birdpaw, who was trying to move her head away from the stinking plant. This only resulted in stabs of pain in her head.

"Eat it," ordered Chiveleaf, her usual grumpy self, "it will help with any tightness in your chest."

"What is it?" asked the apprentice, being cautious just in case the grumpy cat was trying to poison her, which Birdpaw would not put past her. The medicine cat rolled her green eyes and huffed.

"It is borage, not some poisonous plant that is going to kill you." Birdpaw eyed it again before regretfully swallowing it, the taste making her eyes water. Flowerstem made her way from the back of the den and lay down a soaking wet piece of moss in front of the apprentice, who gratefully lapped up the cool water.

"How are you feeling?" asked the brown and white patchy medicine cat, crouching down next to Birdpaw. Her green eyes were filled with kindness and the apprentice really wanted to spill every single secret she had kept from people.

"I am feeling okay," replied the tortoiseshell and white apprentice, "though my head hurts a little and my chest is a little tight." The medicine cat stood up and headed to the herb store, which was a clay wall with holes dug out so herbs could be stored. Flowerstem pulled out a plant with white petals and yellow centres, which made it look like a daisy.

"This is feverfew," explained the medicine cat, "good for headaches and fevers." She put it in front of the apprentice, who quickly ate it, ignoring the taste.

"How do you know so much?" asked Birdpaw. She had always admired medicine cat's knowledge of so many strange plants and berries and leave. To the apprentice, they all just seemed the same.

"Why do you talk so much?" asked Chiveleaf from where she was sorting out bedding. Flowerstem rolled her eyes and smiled at the apprentice.

"It takes a lot of training to learn all of the herbs of a medicine cat," replied the kind she-cat, "it can be frustrating at times and many young medicine cat apprentices just want to give up. What keeps us going though is the fact that we are special as we have received visions from StarClan and have talked to them. There also need to be cats to care for others, otherwise we would have barely any Clanmates."

Birdpaw looked away, talking about visits from StarClan and caring for other cats just made her think about Rainshadow and about her destiny that she could not change. She thought about Maplestar trying to kill her because of the power that she one didn't know about. Flowerstem noticed when the apprentice looked away.

"Is there something you want to tell us?" she asked gently, her voice soft. The apprentice hesitated, debating whether to tell the medicine cat or not about Rainshadow. Birdpaw looked down as her mossy bed as she spoke.

"I had a visit from a StarClan cat last night called Rainshadow," said the apprentice, feeling both medicine cat's gazes on her, "and he told me that my future was going to be very different from other warriors in the Clan. He said I have a power that lets me see cats from StarClan, which could possibly lead me to looking after the whole Clan..." Her voice trail off and Chiveleaf sighed in annoyance from the back of the den.

"You could have told us before!" she yowled and Flowerstem shot her a look, a *shut-up-now-before-the-whole-clan-hears-you* look.

Chiveleaf rolled her eyes and went back to sorting out a pile of herbs. Flowerstem looked back at the apprentice and ran her tail down Birdpaw's back.

"Thank you for telling us," she whispered as the apprentice sank back into her nest, really wanting to yowl back at Chiveleaf and say that she had only seen Rainshadow last night. As she nestled into the moss, it felt like a weight had been lifted off her shoulders.

Chapter Seven

It was about two more days before Birdpaw left the medicine cat den, her wounds healed and leg as good as new. Well, mostly good as new, every now and then if she did too much strenuous activity, it would stiffen up and begin to throb. But that aside, she was definitely happy to be out of the den and back into the sunshine of New-Leaf. The smell of herbs and berries was just mushing her brain and she was desperate to get back to warrior life.

"How are you going?" came a voice and the apprentice turned to see Dewpaw walking towards her with a vole in his mouth.

"Pretty good," she replied, "I am just grateful to be out of the medicine cat den, I swear the smell of the herbs were making me even sicker!" The cream tom laughed and he sat down with the vole, inviting Birdpaw over. The two apprentices tucked into the vole and every now and then, she could feel him watching her but she didn't meet his gaze.

After a little while, both apprentices finished eating and were gazing at the Clan as it went around its daily jobs. Birdpaw started to groom herself but looked up when she felt and smelt a layer of embarrassment floating off Dewpaw. The tom was scuffling his paws on the dusty camp ground. His eyes were looking down at his paws and he opened and closed his mouth like a fish out of water.

"What is wrong Dewpaw?" Asked the tortoiseshell and white she-cat, cocking her head to the side in confusion. The cream tom started to swish his tabby tail from side to side, not meeting Birdpaw's questioning look.

"I have something to tell you," he started, looking down at the ground again and his voice small, "I lik-" but the cream tom was cut short when Whiskerstar walked over. Birdpaw looked up at her mentor who was gazing at her with an excited expression.

"Hi Birdpaw, Hi Dewpaw," he meowed, nodding to both apprentices

before turned to his own apprentice, "Birdpaw, I was wondering if you would be up to make a big journey?" The apprentice nodded and the grey tabby tom's eyes widened even more with excitement.

"Good," he mewed, just about as excited as an apprentice, "then you can come to the Moonpool."

Chapter Eight

"I can't believe I am going to the Moonpool tonight!" squealed Birdpaw for the billionth time that afternoon. She crouched down and lapped up the herbs in front of her, which she had been told were sorrel, daisy, chamomile and burnet. They apparently kept up your strength on long journeys and kept you from becoming hungry. Unfortunately, they were not the nicest tasting things but even the disgusting herbs could damped the apprentice's happiness. Both Flowerstem and Whiskerstar, who were also coming, purred at the apprentice's enthusiasm and lapped up their herbs, the grey tabby tom wincing at the taste of the herbs.

"Now," said Chiveleaf, her normal grumpy self and not at all excited about Whiskerstar receiving his nine lives, "remember not to take any mouse-brained risks because you will be far outside clan territory and no one will be able to help you. Also remember to not start any fights with other Clan cats as you will passing through their territory. Also don -".

"We know Chiveleaf," meowed Flowerstem, smiling at her former mentor, "you don't need to remind us again. I promise everyone will come back in one piece." The older medicine cat rolled her eyes and huffed something under her breath. The young medicine cat rubbed heads with Chiveleaf before turning back to her Clanmates. The three cats pushed through the ivy dangling at the front of the medicine cat den and into the camp, the afternoon sunlight streaming through the trees. The whole Clan was waiting in the clearing and as the travellers emerged out of the den, they began to meow excitedly.

"Good luck Whiskerstar!"

"Stay safe!"

"You will be a great leader!"

"Can I be deputy?"

"Honeypaw, get your tail out of my ear!"

The three cats made their way to the camp exit, waving their tails in fair well to their Clanmates. A cream figure rushed out of the crowd and skidded to a halt in front of Birdpaw and it turned out it was Dewpaw.

"Stay safe," he whispered, his voice barely able to be heard over the loud meowing of the Clan.

"I will, don't you worry," she replied, and ran out of camp to catch up with Flowerstem and Whiskerstar. The adventure had begun.

Chapter Nine

The sky was slowly beginning to sink below the horizon when the three travelling cats reached the AutumnClan border, which was marked by a small stream about only two fox-lengths long. Birdpaw had been pestering Whiskerstar and Flowerstem for countless hours about what the Moonpool was, what is looked like, if would StarClan actually visit them, what it felt like to receive lives, would other Clans let them pass the border and a bunch of other questions. Whiskerstar was trying to block out his apprentice's constant chatter but it was difficult and in the end, he just gave up.

Whiskerstar drew ahead and stood on the river bank, lifting his head and sniffing the air. Flowerstem stood next to him and looked around the other side of the river, her tail tip twitching. Birdpaw walked up beside her mentor and looked up at him, puzzled.

"What are we waiting for?" she asked, taking another step forward, "Can't we just cross and get on with it?"

"This is AutumnClan territory," explained the grey tabby tom, not looking down at his apprentice as he still looked around, "we have to wait for a patrol so we have their permission to cross." He pricked his ears as a vole hopped out of a group of water weeds and into bushes in AutumnClan territory.

"Why do we need their permission?" asked Birdpaw, her eyes watching the bush where the vole had run into, "Can't we just cross and get on with the journey?"

"If we crossed without their permission, they would think we would be trespassing and stealing their prey. If that happened, it would end up resulting in war. War is something we don't want to go into, too many lives are lost when they should not be." He looked up at the blue sky and his eyes turned misty, as if he was reflecting on something that had happened in the past. The apprentice didn't push it any further and she sat down on the grass, grooming her paws and removed pieces of grit between her claws. Paw steps

sounded from the other side of the river bank and all three cats looked up to see a patrol approaching them. Whiskerstar stood up and took a step to the river bank, dipping his head as the patrol stopped in front of the river. A very pale grey tom stepped forward and dipped his head as well, flicking his tail to tell the rest of his patrol to stop.

"Greetings Gorsetail," said Whiskerstar, "I hope you and your Clan are well." The pale grey tom, Gorsetail, whispered something to his patrol in a stern voice before he turned back around to face the grey tabby tom's patrol.

"Greetings Whiskerheart," replied the AutumnClan tom, his green eyes wary, "our Clan is well. What brings you to the bor-?"

"He is not Whiskerheart anymore," interrupted Birdpaw, standing up and walking over to her mentor, "he is Whiskerstar now." The leader swung his head around to his apprentice and narrowed his eyes at her.

"Don't interrupt," he whispered dangerously, "just stay quiet and let me handle this. I am not Whiskerstar yet because StarClan has not granted me my nine lives. The whole Clan just started to call me by a leader's name." The grey tabby tom looked back around at the AutumnClan patrol and spoke to Gorsetail.

"Sorry," he apologized, "my apprentice is a little over excited. I am travelling to the Moonpool to receive my nine lives as Maplestar has ... left our Clan. As his deputy, I will be taking over the leader responsibilities." The AutumnClan patrol stayed still for a couple of heartbeats before Gorsetail dipped his head again.

"I am sorry to hear that Maplestar has left your Clan but I trust you will be a great leader. I know that you need to cross our territory to get to the Moonpool and I will allow for you to travel across our land just this once with us escorting you. But remember you are not allowed to take anything from our territory, herbs or prey. If we find that you have..." The pale grey tom let his words trail off but it was clear that he was saying it as a threat.

"We will make sure not to take anything," promised Whiskerstar,

"thank you for your permission." He swished his tail and Flowerstem and Birdpaw moved up to his side, the three cats carefully watching the AutumnClan patrol as they crossed the river. Birdpaw held in a gasp as the water lapped against her paws, it was freezing! She quickly leapt out of the water and shook her paws out, trying to dry them as quickly as possible. Whiskerstar and Flowerstem crossed calmly and the AutumnClan patrol surrounded them, their eyes looking straight ahead. The tortoiseshell and white apprentice walked behind her mentor and found herself next to a black AutumnClan apprentice.

"Hey," he said, turning to her. He was fully black with a small white star between his ears and dark blue eyes.

"Hi," she replied, smiling at him, "I am Birdpaw." She looked back ahead and saw Whiskerstar's ears twitch but she was not entirely sure if he approved her talking to the apprentice.

"I am Thunderpaw," he said, "and my mentor is Gorsetail. I have been an apprentice for half a moon and I already loving it."

"My mentor is Whiskerstar, though it was originally Maplestar before he left the Clan."

"What did he do?"

"He went missing in the forest and Whiskerstar sent me to look for him. I picked up his scent trail and followed it to a clearing but I couldn't see him there. I called out his name a few times but then rouges started to come out of the bushes and surrounded me. Maplestar then came out and snarled at me before he started to attack me. I could barely defend myself since it was my first day being an apprentice. Luckily, Whiskerstar was on a patrol nearby and he came and saved me. Maplestar is now roaming the forest and is a real threat to us." Birdpaw looked down at her paws, not sure if she should have told the apprentice so much. But as thought about what happened, she found that she just really wanted to know why Maplestar wanted to kill her! Thunderpaw didn't press it anymore and the patrol continued to move on in silence.

Chapter Ten

The AutumnClan patrol continued to escort the SpringClan cats in silence, the only sound that could be heard was the crunching of leaves under their paws and the occasional tweet of a sparrow or thrush. When they reached the AutumnClan border that backed onto no-clan territory, Whiskerstar bowed his head to Gorsetail and thanked him. The pale grey tom, black apprentice and other members of the patrol wished the new leader good luck before the disappeared into a wall of bushes. Whiskerstar flicked his tail at Flowerstem and Birdpaw, walking cautiously towards a line of strange objects that were covered in dirt but still shone in the sunlight.

"What are they?" asked the apprentice, taking a step forward towards the strange objects but her mentor stuck out his tail to stop her.

"Don't go any closer," he warned, sniffing the objects carefully, "they are Twoleg objects and they could be dangerous. I don't want anyone to be injured." He reached out a paw and touched one of the objects, which was round and spotted, and it rolled away down a hill.

"We should be on our way," said Flowerstem, looking up at the sky and the two other cats did the same, to see that the sun almost gone behind the horizon, "we have to get their by moonrise."

"How much further is it?" asked Birdpaw, looking at the brown and white medicine cat. The she-cat didn't respond and just leapt up the nearest tree, digging her claws into the bark and disappearing into the leaves. Leaves scattered all around the ground and one stick dropped close to the apprentice.

"She is strong!" said the apprentice, admiring the medicine cats strength, bearing in mind that all she did all day was sort herbs in the medicine cat den. For a few heartbeats, not much happened, but then leaves showered down and finally the brown and white she-cat

leapt back down to the ground, shaking leaves out of her fur.

"I can see the cave from up there," meowed the medicine cat, pulling a splinter from out between her claws, "it should be no longer than an hour. If we move along now, we should be there before nightfall."

"Let's get moving then," said Whiskerstar marching to the front of the group again and weaving his way down the hill with Flowerstem and Birdpaw following closely behind.

Chapter Eleven

The sun was just a slither on the horizon as the three cats settled down outside a huge cave that had ivy dangling from the entrance. Birdpaw fluffed up her fur in an attempt to try and block out a cool breeze that was gently flowing through the trees on either side of the cave. It was a peaceful place to be, it felt very spiritual. The cats curled up on the ground on the dead leaves that crunched under their weight and the apprentice looked up at the pinkish-red sky where the first few stars were beginning to appear.

"Every one of those stars up there are one of our ancestors," said Whiskerstar, noticing his apprentice looking up at the sky, "it is comforting to know that they are with you wherever you go."

"Do they normally show themselves to others?" she asked, curling her tail around herself and still gazing up at the sky. Flowerstem walked over and settled herself next to Whiskerstar, looking up at the sky as well.

"Normally it is only medicine cats that can see them," she said, "but they take all different forms. Some see them only during dreams, others only hear voices, but some actually see them like they are a normal cat. StarClan cats often have stars shining in their fur and look reasonably younger." Birdpaw nodded, remembering when Rainshadow visited her and how he had stars in his fur. She wondered why StarClan had picked her to be the "special" cat to have this power that was meant to help save the Clans. What did they see in a young apprentice? Could they see her future?

"Hey Birdpaw," said Whiskerstar, breaking into her thoughts, "do you want to come hunting with me and Flowerstem?" She tore her eyes away from the darkening sky and looked at her mentor as he continued, "I am sure I could teach you some techniques." The apprentice nodded and the grey tabby tom stood up and stretched before waving his tail, signalling for the she-cats to follow him.

"Where do you think the best spot to hunt is?" asked Birdpaw as

they walked further into the dark trees. It was slightly eerie with barely any sunlight and no moonlight, plus there was the occasional branch that would creak and make the apprentice jump out of her skin.

"I think there will be some trees that have small hollows in them," replied the tom, "where some mice will be nesting. If we dig deep enough, we should be able to flush them out and then catch them." Birdpaw nodded while Flowerstem sniffed the air, her head held high and nose twitching.

"It is hard to smell anything in here," she said, "since rain has fallen recently. Or it might just because I have been stuck in the medicine cat den for a moon smelling nothing but herbs, herbs and more herbs." Birdpaw laughed but Whiskerstar shot her a look and she immediately became quiet, with the grey tabby tom sniffing the air. It was a few more heartbeats before he looked back over his shoulder at the two cats.

"You are right Flowerstem," said the tom, "it is difficult to tell the scents apart but if we spread out, we have a better chance of catching something. Flowerstem, you can start but don't stray too far and meet back at the cave when you have caught a thing or two. Birdpaw, come with me and I will show you the basics of hunting."

The tortoiseshell and white apprentice nodded, padding after her mentor, not at all loving the feel of the mushy wetland under her white paws. It was very different to the forest back in the SpringClan territory, here barely any light filtered through the many leaves in the trees and the ground was like mud, clinging to their paws and leaving green streaks in their fur.

"Now, when you are hunting," said Whiskerstar, turning around to face his apprentice when they reached a reasonably clear part of the dark forest, "the key thing is to be quiet. The most useful things you have when looking for prey are your eyes and your nose. With your ears, you will be able to hear a mouse scuttling along fallen leaves and with your nose, you will be able to tell the difference between a thrush and a sparrow and other birds.

Now, another important part of hunting it accuracy, otherwise you

lose your prey. To make sure you get your prey, you must learn the hunters crouch until you can do it in your sleep. It is simply to learn but takes concentration." The grey tabby crouched down with his feet tucked under him and chin almost touching the ground.

"This is the hunters crouch," he said, "see how I have my legs tucked under me? This is so that I have power when I push off the ground and can land with my paws on the prey. I am also putting all my weight in my back legs so I can jump quietly without alerting prey. You give it a try." He stood up and Birdpaw crouched down to the ground, trying to copy her mentors position, making sure her legs were tucked under and mouth slightly open.

"That is it," Whiskerstar said, "just make sure your back is lower down, yes, there you go, and lower your chin. That's it! Now watch how I leap." The grey tabby settled back down into the position and looked directly at a twig laying on the ground nearby, before leaping high into the air, very silently before his paws hit the twig and snapped it cleanly in half.

"Wow, that was terrific!" said Birdpaw, "Can I try?" Her mentor nodded and moved one of the sides of the twig in front of where she was crouched. The apprentice flattened herself onto the ground and waited a few heart beats before leaping into the air, not as silently, but with the same amount of accuracy, her two front white paws landing directly on the stick.

"Good job!" meowed her mentor, "I don't think I have ever seen an apprentice get it so quickly!" Birdpaw licked her fur, embarrassed, as Whiskerstar spoke again, sounding very happy.

"Why don't you give it a try on real prey?" he said, "I will not be far away, just yowl out if something is wrong. Remember to meet back at the cave when you have caught something and don't stray too far away." The apprentice nodded and bounded off into the bushes nearby, earning herself an eye roll from Whiskerstar.

It was a little while before she picked up the scent of anything, but she eventually smelt a mouse. Pricking her ears, she heard its tiny footsteps in the leaf litter and she immediately crouched down into the hunter's crouch. Very slowly, she crept up on it, getting a

glimpse of the brown fur in the green leaves. Then, as silently as she had ever moved in her life, she leapt into the air and landed on the mouse, killing it swiftly. Birdpaw fought the urge to yowl out in excitement, she had caught her first piece of prey!

Remembering what her mentor had said, the apprentice walked back the way they had come into the forest. Though, when she was just a few feet away from the cave she heard voices whispering softly. Fear immediately pulsed through her, and she crouched down. It had to be intruders, there was no way that either Flowerstem or Whiskerstar had finished hunting.

Though, when she peaked through the bushes, Birdpaw spotted the medicine cat and the soon-to-be leader leaning against each other, their tails twining. The apprentice's breath caught in her throat, this couldn't be happening, he mentor and the medicine cat mates? The apprentice watched them, her heart beating rapidly before Whiskerstar stood up and spoke in an audible voice.

"Let me see how Birdpaw is getting on," and with a final purr, he walked into the forest, with Birdpaw slinking back into the shadows, her mouse still in her mouth, though her excitement had disappeared.

Chapter Twelve

Birdpaw pretended that she was on her way back to the cave when Whiskerstar came across her. He looked mildly surprised that she had caught something, congratulating her as they settled down outside the cave with Flowerstem. The moon was high up in the sky as the three cats ate in silence, the only noises from crickets chirping. When each cat had eaten their fill, Flowerstem stood up, catching Whiskerstar and Birdpaw's attention.

"We should go into the cave now," she announced, "before the moonlight passes." Whiskerstar dipped his head in agreement and all cats stood up, stretching their legs before walking into the cave, the medicine cat in front followed closely by the apprentice and then the soon-to-be leader. The darkness was uncomfortable and felt like it was suffocating Birdpaw, the dirt on the ground clogging her claws and the scents muddling her head. After what felt like eternity, the three cats eventually came out in a dark area that was quite wide. The apprentice's eyes took a little while to adjust, but she made out a jagged hole in the roof.

"Welcome to the Moonpool," said Flowerstem, her green eyes glowing in the dark. As she spoke, moonlight spilt through the jagged hole in the room, landing on a small but deep pool of water towards the back of the cave. The light lit up the whole cave, the moss covering the walls sparkled with water drop lets and small yellow mushrooms looked like they glowed.

Flowerstem and Whiskerstar crouched down at the pool and Birdpaw quickly followed, completely unsure about what she should be doing. Her excitement was contagious, when she looked over at her mentor, she was his eyes sparkling and whiskers twitching as he looked down at the pool.

"Just touch your nose to the pool," instructed Flowerstem, dipping her nose on the surface, with Whiskerstar and his apprentice following. Birdpaw felt darkness close over her, before she felt the ground underneath her change, from springy moss to lush grass.

She opened her eyes and found herself standing in a dark forest that looked a lot like the SpringClan territory. A loud yowl made her jump out of her skin and she saw a dark ginger tom standing in the clearing near her along with a grey tabby tom, and the two didn't look like friends. The ginger tom's voice was slightly muffled but the apprentice caught a few words he was saying.

"Hello... long overdue... brings you here?"

"Give me back..." growled the grey tom, "...games."

"You mean..."said the ginger tom, "...your kits ... have any need for ...finish them off now."

"Don't you dare..." growled the grey tabby tom, sliding out his claws and digging them into the ground as he got into a battle stance. The dark ginger tom laughed before speaking again.

"...shouldn't I?" He held up a paw and inspected his claws, "...first time I have..."

"You are a monster," the grey tabby tom snarled before he yowled something else and jumped at the dark ginger tom, claws out as barrelled him to the ground. Birdpaw gasped as more cats poured out from the bushes on each side of the toms and joined in the battle. The two toms were rolling around on the ground, snarling and bitting at each other as the other cats fought as well, blood pouring onto the once green grass.

Soon the air was thick with the smell of blood, bodies lying on the ground. Birdpaw flattened her ears against her head to try and block out the pain-filled screeches and dying groans. She started to back into the bushes behind her but the dark ginger tom ran at her and barrelled her to the ground.

The apprentice jolted awake and leapt to her paws, fur spiked up and breathe coming in short gasps, as she looked wildly around. Whiskerstar was laying nearby in a deep sleep, and it hit Birdpaw, the grey tabby tom in the battle was Whiskerstar!

"I need to get some fresh air," thought the apprentice, spinning

around a racing out of the cave, her paws striking the muddy floor so hard that she slipped and stumbled. Her lungs hurt as she burst out of the cave and into the crisp night air. She sat down on a rock nearby and caught her breath before removing the dirt clogging her claws. Cricket chirps filled the air and a gentle breeze blew through the trees, creating a quiet whistling. As she groomed her dirty fur, the apprentice thought over what she had seen at the Moonpool. Would there be a battle or was it a nightmare? The elders at camp said that the Moonpool often showed or told medicine cats about the future. A chill went through her spine as she looked up at the moon, hopefully, there would be no battle.

Chapter Thirteen

Paw steps thundered through the tunnel leading to the Moonpool and Birdpaw turned around, startled, to see Whiskerstar and Flowerstem burst through the entrance, their pelts brushed and eyes wide. Whiskerstar swung his head around and Flowerstem's green eyes met Birdpaw's blue ones, before the medicine cat tapped the grey tabby tom on the shoulder with her white-tipped tail. The tom spun around and visibly relaxed when he saw the apprentice, though stress was still in his blue eyes.

"Why did you run away from us like that?" demanded the grey tabby tom, "you had both of us worried sick! Seeing claw scratches through the moss on the floor and you nowhere to be seen? We through you had been taken!"

"Calm down Whiskerstar," soothed the medicine cat, looking at the tabby, "she is okay, aren't you Birdpaw?"

"Yes," replied the tortoiseshell and white apprentice, nodding, "I just needed fresh air." She felt slightly guilty at not telling the medicine cat and leader the "dream" she had, but an instinct inside her felt like she shouldn't tell them, especially since Whiskerstar was one of the cats in the battle. The medicine cat nodded, though the grey tabby didn't look so convinced, his eyes slightly narrowed. Birdpaw squirmed under his stern gaze, shuffling her paws.

"Did you get your nine lives?" asked the apprentice, eager for a subject change.

"Yes," replied Whiskerstar, though he still seemed a little tense, detecting that his apprentice was not telling the truth. Birdpaw's pelt prickled with the awkwardness in the air as Flowerstem glanced up at the sky, which was a deep blue with the moon slowly sinking.

"We should better get back," said the brown and white medicine cat, "before dawn and before the AutumnClan patrols go out again."

Whiskerstar nodded, taking the lead of the patrol with Flowerstem and Birdpaw falling behind, tension still hovering in the air.

The forest was a whole lot more quiet at night, barely any birds sang and no prey scuttled in the leaf litter. The apprentice's pelt pricked with unease and she expected a fox or something to jump out at her. However, as they crossed through AutumnClan territory, nothing did, apart from a big fat rabbit that Whiskerstar wouldn't let Birdpaw catch, putting her in bad mood for the rest of the night.

When they reached SpringClan territory, Birdpaw relaxed, curling up in her nest in the apprentice den, sleep overwhelming her.

Chapter Fourteen

A sharp paw poked Birdpaw in the side of her stomach and she grunting, squeezing her eyes shut even more. The paw poked her again in the side and she rolled over, trying to bat the paw away with her eyes closed.

"Come on Birdpaw," came Dewpaw's voice, and the tortoiseshell and white apprentice reluctantly opened her eyes to see the cream tabby apprentice standing over her. She groaned, rolling away from him and shut her eyes again, putting a paw over her nose as she tried to go back to sleep.

"What do you want Dewpaw?" she grumbled as the cream tabby continued to poke her, "it is too early to be up!" The tom snorted in amusement as the other apprentice's tail swished, showing that she was annoyed by his presence at so early in the morning.

"Stagleap put you on the dawn patrol with Whiskerstar," he replied as Birdpaw reluctantly got up, stretching her legs out, her muscles still sore from her long journey last night to the Moonpool.

"Stagleap?" she asked, wondering why her father put her on a patrol. He was only a warrior!

"Oh, he is the new deputy," replied the cream tom, "Whiskerstar appointed his last night when you were asleep." Birdpaw yawned and nodded at the same time, very reluctantly walking out of the den, brushing past an amused Dewpaw, whose whiskers were twitching as her sleepiness.

"Do we always have to get up at this time?" asked the tortoiseshell and white apprentice, as they both padded towards Whiskerstar, who was waiting with a long-haired musty brown coloured she-cat and a dark grey tom with white spots, "I am completely exhausted!"

"No," replied Dewpaw, his whisker's still twitching with uncontainable amusement, "it is only because you are on dawn

patrol. And Whiskerstar gave me the satisfaction of waking you up." Birdpaw reached out a paw and tapped the tom over the ear, sending him a look as they both stopped in front of Whiskerstar.

"Ah good," said the grey tabby tom, turning around from the grey, black and white speckled tom he had been talking to, "hello Birdpaw, good to see you up. And thank you Dewpaw." He dipped his head to the cream tabby apprentice, who nodded back and walked away. "I hope you aren't too tired to go on a dawn patrol, Birdpaw, because it is a perfect time to show you the territory, not to hot or cold." The she-cat nodded, excitement fizzing through her at the thought of going out into the territory and exploring it properly. Whiskerstar's whiskers twitched as he saw her suppressed amusement, before flicking his tail to Grassbreeze, a musty brown she-cat and Ashflake, the grey, black and white speckled tom. The patrol pushed through the camp barrier, and out into the forest beyond.

The forest was different this early in the morning, normally the sunlight would create dappled patterns on the grass and draw long shadows. Instead, the sun was just peaking over the horizon far in the distance, like a cat stalking a mouse, slow and steady. The four cats walked through the forest, their tails swishing lazily, but ears pricked. They reached a clump of bushes and Ashflake, who was the leader of the patrol, stuck out his tail to stop the other cats. He sniffed the air while Whiskerstar leaned over to his apprentice, whispering in her ear.

"This is our border with SummerClan," he said, nodding past the clump of bushes, "they have really short fur, which makes them love Greenleaf so much, even when the rest of us can't stand it because it is so hot. Their leader is Birchstar, who is a sandy-coloured tom." While her mentor has been saying this, Ashflake and Grassbreeze had marked the border with their scents before walking back to the leader and his apprentice.

"What are the other Clans?" asked Birdpaw, eager for information, literally bouncing on her paws as the patrol moved on from the SummerClan border.

"There is AutumnClan, who you have already met when we went to

the Moonpool last night," replied Whiskerstar, "and WinterClan, who live in the mountains. Their leader is Mountainstar and their fur in long and thick, normally in shades of grey, white, black or blue-grey, colours found in the mountains. They also love leaf-bare."

"And are one of the only ones," added Grassbreeze, "my father was from WinterClan, but I preferred the heat, like my mother, who was from SpringClan. Though my long fur can be a bit of a nuisance. "

"It is definitely the better place to be," said Ashflake, "I would hate to live in the mountains, snow around me and barely any prey, freezing your backside off when you tried to sleep." The patrol laughed, as they entered a clearing, and Birdpaw immediately stopped.

Chapter Fifteen

"Birdpaw?" Whiskerstar's voice asked from far away. The apprentice stood rooted in the spot, fear pulsing through her. She couldn't bring herself to move away, her eyes wide and claws out, digging into the dusty ground.

"What is wrong with her?" asked Ashflake's far away voice as Whiskerstar came to stand next to his apprentice, putting a grey tabby tail on her shoulder but it did little to comfort the apprentice. All she could hear was cats screeching and yowls of pain, blood pooling on the ground amongst dead bodies. Cat withered in their own blood before their eyes turned glassy, staring into nothing. Some had their mouths opened in silent screams while others had their faces scrunched up in pain. She turned and saw Maplestar prowling out of three bushes, walking straight towards her, his ears pinned back and amber eyes gleaming with malice.

"Birdpaw?" asked the grey tabby leader, causing the apprentice to jump back into the present. The dying cats disappeared, the grass was no longer blood-red and Maplestar had vanished. Birdpaw took a few deep breaths, trying to calm her pounding heart, closing her eyes and then opening them again, Grassbreeze and Ashflake looking at her strangely.

"Get a grip Birdpaw," the apprentice scolded herself, *"you look like a complete idiot. It was just a dream, there will be no battle. Just a dream, just a dream."* She managed a wobbly smile at the two warriors and took another deep breath.

"Just a mild headache," she said, "I am fine." Though she did not feel fine at all, her heart pounded against her chest and her stomach churned like she has eaten crow-food.

"Why don't we go back to camp?" suggested Whiskerstar, looking down at his apprentice with concern, something in his eyes showing that he knew she didn't have a headache. Birdpaw was grateful for this option and nodded, trying not to be too enthusiastic and keep

her lie of a headache. Grassbreeze and Ashflake nodded, though they still looked as the tortoiseshell and white apprentice.

The journey back through the forest was silent and uneventful, except for when Ashflake caught a sparrow, leaping up a tree like a squirrel. Whiskerstar stayed next to his apprentice with the two warriors bringing up the back. When they pushed through the camp barrier, Whiskerstar tapped his apprentice on the shoulder with his tabby tail, jerking her out of her thoughts about the battle.

"Let's go to the medicine cat den," he said, nodding towards where Flowerstem was sorting berries out the front of the den, "and sort out that headache of yours." As Ashflake and Grassbreeze passed he bent down to whisper in her ear, "and tell us what it really was about." Birdpaw nodded, though she dreaded telling the medicine cats and her mentor about the upcoming battle. They both walked up to the medicine cat den and Whiskerstar beckoned to Flowerstem with his tail as she looked up at them both.

"We need to talk inside," he said before disappearing through the ivy dangling out the front of the entrance. The brown and white medicine cat looked at Birdpaw questioningly but the apprentice avoided her gaze, following her mentor inside.

Chiveleaf looked up with a leaf in her mouth, rolling her eyes with a loud sigh as Birdpaw stepping in a pile of leaves, scattering them everywhere. Whiskerstar was sitting near the pond at the centre of the den, a firm look on his face and Flowerstem appeared, rolling the berries inside with her paw.

"I really hope you two have a good reason in being here," grumbled Chiveleaf as she rearranged the pile of leaves scattered on the floor, "we are quite busy at the moment." Birdpaw resisted the urge to roll her eyes at the old medicine cat's grumpiness, and instead took a deep breath as Whiskerstar replied.

"Well, Birdpaw had something she want to share with us," he said and all eyes turned to the tortoiseshell and white apprentice. Birdpaw took another deep breath before launching into a big explanation of what she has seen at the Moonpool, purposely leaving out the part of Whiskerstar. She then told them what she

had seen at the clearing during the border patrol. The three cat listened with interest, and even Chiveleaf didn't interrupt. The apprentice finished her story and Whiskerstar rose, his eyes glimmering with an unidentifiable emotion.

"Why didn't you tell us earlier?" he asked, his voice surprisingly gentle. Birdpaw ducked her head and licked her fur, trying to come up with an answer that was not something along the lines of "well, I didn't want to tell you because you are one the cats in the battle."

"I don't know," replied the apprentice, her voice quiet as she looked at her paws, "I suppose I didn't want to bother you because I could have been just a dream."

"*Stupid answer,*" the apprentice told herself, "*it obviously was not a dream, since Rainshadow, that StarClan cat, told you could see the future.*" That just made Birdpaw's worry increase and Chiveleaf snorted, seeming to have thought the same thing, stacking berries in the wall behind Whiskerstar.

"Thank you for telling us," Said Flowerstem, glaring at her old mentor, using the same gentle voice as her mate, "but I have to say, I don't think it is the dream.

Chapter Sixteen

Birdpaw felt crushed, even though she already had basically already knew that her "vision but could be a dream" was definitely not a dream. Maybe it was that she thought the medicine cats, Flowerstem in particular, would offer her some comfort. Though when she looked the brown and white medicine cat in the eye, she saw a tiny sparkle of sympathy.

"Do you know when this battle will take place?" asked Whiskerstar, standing up and pacing the exit of the den, losing his calmness from before. Birdpaw shook her head, not trusting her voice in case it came out like a mouse squeak. The grey tabby sighed, ignoring Chiveleaf's grumbles about churning up dirt and making a mess.

"We must prepare," he said, not stopping his pacing, "even though we don't know when it might be. It is always good to be ready. I will ask Stagleap to start preparing training groups so that we can refine out techniques and become better. Flowerstem and Chiveleaf, maybe you could stock up on extra herbs, just in case? And Birdpaw," he added in a softer tone, "I want you not to worry about the battle. Just focus on training and tell us immediately if you find out anything more."

"*Bit hard to do that,"* mused the apprentice, "*how can he expect me not to worry? Of course I am going to!"* Instead of saying anything out loud, she just nodded.

"Meanwhile," continued the leader, half talking to himself as he still paced, "I will inform all the warriors and apprentice there will be extra training. We will also have to strengthen the dens and ask the queens to run the kits through drills of what happens if the battle comes to camp." The she-cats nodded and Whiskerstar walked briskly out of the den. Birdpaw began to follow but Flowerstem but out her tail to stop her. Birdpaw looked at her puzzled, what did she want to ask?

"I just want you to know," said the medicine cat, hesitating slightly,

looking at Chiveleaf before lowering her voice "that you are one of the bravest apprentices that I have known. You must feel so pressured with this power and everything, but you are doing so well. I can't imagine how things would go if somebody had this ability. It is quite a burden but I am proud of you." Birdpaw felt emotion choke her throat and she rushed forward, rubbing heads with the medicine cat.

"Thanks you Flowerstem," she whispered, "that means so much to me." It was true, she wasn't sure if any cats in the clan who knew about her power actually though she was doing a good job. If they though she was just weird and foolish for the ways she reacted.

"Enough of the softness," snapped Chiveleaf, pulling out two purple flowers and breaking the precious moment, "didn't you hear Whiskerstar? We have to gather extra herbs. Chop chop!" Flowerstem pulled away from the apprentice, rolling her eyes, before heading to the back of the den where the cream she-cat was now complaining of rotting juniper berries. Birdpaw pushed through den exit and into the bright sunlight, a big change from the semi-dark den and the brightness burned the apprentice's eyes.

"What did you do this time?" asked a voice and she looked over to her right, seeing Dewpaw walking over to her with a shrew in his mouth. Amusement sparkled in his green eyes but Birdpaw didn't feel like joking at that moment, she was still caught up in her vision. Dewpaw saw her sombre expression and dropped the shrew in front of his paws, worry replacing his amusement.

"What is wrong?" he asked in a concerned voice, moving closer and putting a tail on her shoulder. She looked away from his green eyes, not wanting to tell him the truth but not wanting to lie to him either. He moved away from her side and stood in front of her gaze. She took a deep breath and put a fake smile on her face, though it probably was not very convincing.

"I am fine," she said, sounding more confident than what she felt. She moved away from Dewpaw and towards the camp entrance. She could still feel the tom's rejected and confused gaze watching her but she continued padding on. Maybe fresh air could do her some good, help her to clear her thoughts. She pushed through the

ivy tendrils and into the forest, the grass soft under her paws and birdsongs calming.

She wandered around for a while, not sure where she was going. Eventually, she reached the lake, the end of all the Clan's territory but also where the gathering island floated. The clear water lapped at the pebbles on the shore, creating a soft wish-washy sound that calmed Birdpaw's nerves. She sat down and curled her tail around her paws, gazing at the water.

At around sun-high, the apprentice sensed someone else nearby, she looked up and saw Rainshadow emerging from a pair of bushes. He nodded to her and sat down next to her, curling his tail around his paws. There was silence between the two cats before Rainshadow spoke, his voice strangely calming.

"You made a good choice in telling them," he said, not looking at her, instead just gazing across the lake.

"Do you think I should've told Whiskerstar that I saw him in the battle?" asked the apprentice, looking up at the StarClan cat. He didn't reply, nor did he look at her. The silence stretched out between the two cats before Birdpaw confessed.

"I am scared Rainshadow," she whispered, looking down at her black paws, "I don't know what to do."

"Don't be," he replied in his deep rumbling voice, looking down at her, "we are here to help you every step of the way. You do are doing perfectly anyway." Birdpaw smiled at him and they both gazed out at the lake.

Chapter Seventeen

It was past sun-high when Birdpaw came back to camp, a small mouse dangling from her jaws. She added it to the fresh kill pile and retreated to a hidden part of the camp, under a roof of brambles. She groomed her fur while watching as the Clan went about their activities. Silversong came out from the nursery, her belly swinging with kits that would be due any day. Cloudspot shared a shrew with Stormwind and Shadeleaf's border patrol returned, with Emberpaw and Sparkclaw following behind.

"Are you going to talk to me now?" asked Dewpaw, shuffling into the bramble cave and settling down next to Birdpaw, his green eyes looking at her. The tortoiseshell and white apprentice sighed and looked out of the bramble cave, putting her head on her paws. She would have to tell him eventually, there was no way she could avoid it. Knowing the cream tom, he would keep pestering her until she told him. She took another deep breath and launched into her story, starting from when she went into the medicine cat den after her apprentice ceremony and finished at when she had her vision at the Moonpool. The whole time, the cream tom stayed silent, taking in all of the information while gazing out of where they were sitting. When Birdpaw finished her story, Dewpaw stayed silent before he whispered word that she had to strain to here.

"Why didn't you tell me sooner?" He looked at her and she saw mixed emotions burning in his emerald green eyes. Sadness, fear and something else flitted across his face and Birdpaw could almost seeing him breaking at the thought of someone murdering her. She tore her eyes away from his.

"I don't know," she whispered back, choking back her sadness, "I suppose I didn't want you worrying about me."

"Of course I am going to worry out you," he replied softly, "there is someone out there who wants to kill you! And besides, you are going to need help defeating him." Birdpaw shook her head, and looked him in the eye.

"You can't!" she meowed, worried at the thought of what Maplestar could do to him "he will end up killing you as well. I don't want you to die."

"But you will end up dying as well!" he meowed back, fear lighting up his green eyes, "and th-"

"It is better me than you," she retorted, standing up with her fur brushed out, "I am the one he want, not you." In no more than a whisper she said, "If you died, it would kill me."

She walked out of the den, only to be summoned by Whiskerstar's call, along with the rest of the Clan.

"Today is the full moon gathering," said the leader, standing up on the Highrock and gazing down at the Clan, "Moonflower, Stagleap, Vineleaf, Sparkclaw, Emberpaw, Seedspot, Windpaw, Birdpaw, Honeypaw, Petalsplash, Dewpaw, Flowerstem, Mothleap, Stripecloud and Foxleap, you will all be coming. I expect good behaviour from all of you." At this, he looked towards the apprentices that had been invited, giving them a stern look. He jumped down from the rock as the selected cats clustered together in a group, moving towards the camp barrier. Birdpaw sighed, wishing that she could just have some time to herself but she had no choice to follow. The rest of the cats left in the camp yowled out their farewells and wished good luck.

"Are you excited?" asked Birdpaw's brother, Emberpaw, bouncing away on his paws as they walked out of the camp barrier.

"Yeah, sure," replied Birdpaw, not at all excited. She felt guilty about yelling at Dewpaw, but what she had said was true. There was no way she was going to let Maplestar get to him. Sparkclaw, Emberpaw's mentor, flicked the dark ginger apprentice over the ear with his tail but the apprentice barely calmed down. Instead, he and Windpaw raced ahead of the group, scattering leaves on the ground. Sparkclaw rolled his eyes and walked up to Foxleap. Birdpaw watched Whiskerstar and Flowerstem, who were walking together at the front of the group. They were whispering to each other, their heads bent before Whiskerstar stopped and turned his head to look at this Clanmates.

"Single file SpringClan," he called, "and be careful as you walk over the log. We don't want to be dragging anyone out of the water." Birdpaw looked up again and began to try and shuffle into line. Eventually, she shuffled in behind Mothleap and slowly the clan began to walk across the log onto the Gathering Island.

The Gathering Island was not a very big island, it was most surrounded by tall pine trees that looked like they were going to touch the sky. Clear water lapped at the pebbly shore and reflected the moonlight. The ground was coated in a pale green moss that shone under the moonlight.

Whiskerstar, Flowerstem, Emberpaw and Sparkclaw had already made it across to the island and were waiting for the rest of their Clanmates. When it came to her turn, Birdpaw took a cautious step onto the wooden log, pleased to find that is was mostly sturdy. She walked across it confidently, digging her claws in only once when an owl flew over, spooked her.

When the whole Clan eventually reached the island (with only Honeypaw losing her balance), the sight of all the cats left Birdpaw with wide eyes, she had never seen so many cats before. There were long-haired cat, short-haired cats and pelts of all different shades. She moved when Emberpaw and Windpaw went racing past her over to a group of apprentices their size. Birdpaw wasn't really in the mood to find any new friends in the Clans and instead went to a far corner of the gathering space, sitting under a tree branch and watching the leaders on top of a larger version of the Highrock. Next to Whiskerstar was a sandy coloured tom with short fur and green eyes. Next to him was a dark brown she-cat with white paws and green eyes. The last leader was a huge, grey tom with long fur and ice blue eyes.

"Hey Birdpaw," came Dewpaw's voice from behind her and she turned around, "I am sorry for upsetting you before, I really didn't mean to. I was just worried about you, what would happen to you." There was an awkward silence before Dewpaw spoke again.

"Are you mad at me?" Birdpaw hesitated before shaking her head, still facing away from his. She heard the cream tom sigh but before he could say anything else, there was a loud yowl from the leaders,

who were sitting on the branches of a large tree, gazing down at the Clan cats.

Chapter Eighteen

"Welcome everyone," said the sandy-coloured tom who stood next to Whiskerstar, "to the full-moon Gathering. To start off, prey has been running well in SummerClan and Sunlily has a healthy litter of four kits, Brightkit, Darkkit, Creamkit and Lilackit. A fox also came through our territory about a quarter moon ago, but our warriors were able to fight it off." He stepped back and dipped his head to the huge grey tom sitting to his left.

"Thank you Birchstar," he said in a deep rumbling voice, "WinterClan is thriving, with two new apprentices, Flakepaw and Blizzardpaw. We also have two new cats joining us, Breezesong and Cloverheart." He stepped back and dipped his head to the dark brown she-cat, who stepped forward and gazed over the assembled cats.

"Thank you Mountainstar," she said, "AutumnClan's prey has been running well. We also have three new warriors, Leafclaw, Dovesplash and Weaselstripe. And Whiskerstar, we encountered a family of badgers nearby with two cubs. They are near our shared border and though they have not bothered us yet, we are keeping an eye on them." She looked over to Whiskerstar and nodded her head to him and he nodded back, stepping forward.

"Thank you Deerstar," he said, holding her gaze before turning to face the gathered cats, "I know you are all wondering why I am here tonight. Maplestar is not dead, he in fact, is perfectly well. Except for the fact that he tried to kill one of our apprentices about a quarter moon ago." A gasp echoed through the Gathering Area and Birdpaw felt Dewpaw watching her. She forced herself to look at Whiskerstar as he continued.

"He has left the Clan to be leader of a dangerous group of rouges. My patrol fought them, and we won, only just. I am warning all of you gathered here today, if you see Maplestar and his rouges, stay well away until you have no choice but to fight them." Whispers and murmurs filled the Gathering Area, with most cats glancing

over at SpringClan, their eyes wide. Birdpaw saw Whiskerstar give her an encouraging look before launching into the normal report of the last moon.

As the leader's jumped down from the large tree at the end of the gathering, a flash of light caught Birdpaw's attention, and she turned around to see a StarClan cat weaving his way through the crowd. He was black with white splashes and vibrant blue eyes. As the apprentice watched, he moved over to her mother, Moonflower, and put his tail on her back, even though she wouldn't be able to feel it. Another flash of light distracted Birdpaw from the tom and she turned to see a silver tabby she-cat. Then a tortoiseshell and white she-cat appeared, along with a ginger and white she-cat. More and more StarClan cats appeared, some nodded to the medicine cats, and others wove their way among the living cats to see their friends or family.

"Birdpaw," said Whiskerstar, somehow ending up beside his apprentice, "Birdpaw!" The apprentice pulled her eyes away from the ginger and white cat and looked up at her mentor. "Why don't you go mix with the other apprentices?" She shrugged and looked back at the StarClan cats still roaming the clearing.

"I don't really feel like it," she replied, "I am happy just staying here and watching everyone." Her mentor nodded before moving through the crowd to talk to a bunch of AutumnClan cats.

"You should talk to some of the other apprentices," came Dewpaw's voice and she jumped, forgetting he was there, turning around to looking him in his green eyes. "I will introduce you to some of them if you want." Knowing that yet again, he would continue to pester her, she very reluctantly nodded, following the cream tom through the crowd of spirit cats and living cats. Eventually they made their way to a group of apprentices about Dewpaw's age, and they greeted the two SpringClan cats with meows and waves of their tail.

"Hey Dewpaw," one of them said, a ginger tabby she-cat with white paws, "we were just discussing what your new leader, Whiskerstar, said. You know, the stuff about Maplestar attacking an apprentice." Birdpaw felt her heart pick up speed but she forced her fur to stay flat. She forced herself to stay calm and look like she didn't know

anything.

"Can you tell us who it was?" inquired a spotted she-cat, leaning forward with interest sparking her eyes. The ginger tabby she-cat with the white paws shoved her and Dewpaw shot the apprentice a look and shook his head, but Birdpaw spoke before he could say anything.

"It was me," she said in a quiet voice, and the apprentice gasped.

"How did you heal from your wounds so quickly?" asked a black tom, who she recognised as Thunderpaw. The other two apprentices leaned forward, their eyes wide and sparking.

"We have good medicine cats in SpringClan," she replied, affection for Flowerstem (not so much Chiveleaf) warming her inside. The two medicine cats must have worked so hard to keep her alive, if the apprentice's wounds were as severe as she remembered.

"I couldn't imagine Birchstar doing something like that," said the ginger tabby she-cat looking up at where her leader had been sitting, "he is really nice."

"Why did he attack you?" asked the spotted she-cat and Birdpaw started to not like her, she just needed to keep to her own business. The tortoiseshell and white she-cat opened her mouth to come up with a really pathetic excuse but Dewpaw thankfully interrupted.

"We should go Birdpaw," he said, looking over to where Whiskerstar was gathering up his Clan, "Otherwise we will be left behind." She sent him a grateful look, not wanting to hear her own excuse that she would have had to have come up with. She dipped her head to the three apprentices, resisting the temptation to glare at the spotted she-cat, and moved off with Dewpaw towards Whiskerstar, who was waiting at the top of the Gathering Area. With a swish of his tail, the Clan moved off, shortly being followed by SummerClan.

The trip back home was uneventful, and Birdpaw liked it that way. It let her dwell in her own thoughts about what had happened at the Gathering. The cats who had been left at camp meow quiet greetings as the Gathering patrol slipped in through the camp

barrier and into their dens. When Birdpaw sank into her nest, she felt her tense muscles relax and she slipped into a peaceful sleep that was not riddled with visions.

Chapter Nineteen

Birdpaw had a pretty good sleep that night, considering she had gotten back to camp at around midnight. Towards dawn however, her peaceful sleep was interrupted by loud yowling. At first, she wondered if she had just imagined the noise, but when it came again, she stood up in her nest. Fear pulsed through her as she pushed through the exit of the apprentice den, wondering if Maplestar had come to attack. Half of the Clan warriors were running around out of their den, their fur standing on end and sleepy eyes wide. A blur of movement caught everyone's attention and they turned to see Dewpaw streaking out of the nursery, skidding to a halt in the middle of the camp clearing.

"Someone get the medicine cats!" he yowled, "Silversong is having her kits!" Birdpaw was the quickest to react and spun around to the medicine cat den and burst inside, almost running into a very sleepy Flowerstem.

"What is happening?" she asked, yawning, "It is not even dawn yet!"

"It is Silversong," panted Birdpaw, "she is having her kits!" Another yowl echoed through camp and Flowerstem raced to the herb store, before racing past the apprentice and out of the den, looking wide awake. Birdpaw ran out of the den as well, skidding to a halt next to Dewpaw, who was looking at the nursery, concerned.

"Will she be okay?" asked the tortoiseshell and white apprentice, looking at the still moving ivy from when Flowerstem had pushed through.

"I don't know," replied the tom, "I don't remember Moonflower being this loud when she had you and your littermates. Though, I was pretty young, so..." He didn't finish his sentence as the queen inside the nursery gave another loud wail. Dewpaw dug his claws into the ground before pacing around the clearing. As Birdpaw look around, she didn't see any of the other warriors looking very concerned. At least one the toms should be, since the Silversong had

to be one of their mates.

"Who is going to be the father of the kits?" she asked Dewpaw when he walked past her.

"Maplestar," he said, not looking at her, focusing more on not having a nervous breakdown. Birdpaw felt a chill go down her spine as she heard him say the name. She hoped that none of the kit's looked like their father.

"Why are you so worried?" asked the she-cat, watching the tom pacing around the camp clearing.

"She is my mentor," replied Dewpaw, not looking anywhere but the ground. After a few more yowls from the kitting queen, Flowerstem emerged from the den, looking very frazzled. The warriors in the clearing looked up and Dewpaw stopped pacing.

"She has had two toms and a she-cat," said the medicine cat, purring. The clearing of cats burst out in happy meows and purrs. Dewpaw rushed into the den and Birdpaw followed, her eyes slowly adjusting to the semi-darkness of the nursery. On the left side of the den was a nest with a tired, fluffy silver she-cat curled up in it. Dewpaw beckoned with his tail and they both moved over to the nest, crouching down. At the queen's belly was a fluffy silver she-kit, a pure white tom and a dark ginger tom. When her gaze fell on the last kit, Birdpaw felt her muscles stiffen, the kit looked so much like his father, a little too much.

"They are adorable," breathed Dewpaw, looking at the little squirming kits.

"You have gone all soft," Birdpaw teased quietly, not wanting to disturb the kits and distracting her thoughts from the dark ginger kit. The silver she-kit let out a tiny little meow and Dewpaw's eyes sparkled. Silversong nudged the dark ginger tom, who was trying to get to reach Birdpaw, back into the nest.

"What are you going to call them?" asked Birdpaw.

"The she-cat will be Mistykit, the white tom will be Icekit and the

dark ginger kit will be Firekit." Dewpaw nodded, gently nudging Mistykit with his nose when she tried to crawl away from her mother. The two apprentices murmured their congratulations before quietly backing out of the den and into the clearing with Whiskerstar and Stagleap going in. Birdpaw retreated back to her nest and looked out of the den exit at the starry sky.

"*New life in the Clan is always good,*" she told herself firmly, trying to push out her thoughts about Firekit and how much he resembled his father. But as she curled up, a flash of Maplestar's cruel face flashed before her eyes, unsettling her once more.

Chapter Twenty

"Come on," said Whiskerstar for about the billionth time, "try again. Remember is swipe then duck." Birdpaw nodded but the words just washed over her, not making any difference in her movements. She was still tired from the gathering last night and she couldn't stop thinking about Maplestar and Firekit. She took a deep breath and tried to push away the nagging thoughts before swiping at her mentor and trying to duck. She ducked too quickly and hit her chin hard on the ground, biting her tongue with the taste of blood filling her mouth. Birdpaw spat out the blood and shook her head, mentally scolding herself for not paying more attention. She needed to listen and learn, especially since a battle was looming.

"You do it like this," said her mentor, sighing, before demonstrating the move again. Birdpaw attempted again but lost her balance, landing with a hard thump of the ground. She stifled a yawn as her mentor gazed down at her, his blue eyes stern.

"I know you were up late last night," he said as she stood up, shaking out her now-dusty fur, "but that gives you no excuse to slacken off your training. Especially when Maplestar is threatening to attack us."

"I don't need to be reminded," replied the apprentice, unsuccessfully holding back her yawn this time.

"Then pay attention to what I am saying," Said the tabby tom, almost groaning, "so you are prepared for what comes." Birdpaw nodded, just resisting the urge to roll her eyes. Normally, she would be annoyed at her mentor for bringing up anything to do with Maplestar and her power, but she was just too tired to care about anything.

They kept practicing the move until just past sun high, with Birdpaw's legs aching and head throbbing from Whiskerstar's light but effective taps on her head. The two cats pushed through the camp entry and Birdpaw formed a quick plan in her head about

what she was going to do for the rest of the day. She made a beeline for the fresh kill pile and picked up a still-warm sparrow, before settling down outside the apprentice den. Her thoughts wondered to old memories as she chewed on the sparrow, the feathers swirling gently in the breeze.

"Hey Birdpaw," came a voice and the apprentice looked up to see Flowerstem walking towards her with a mouse in her brown jaws, "how was your training this morning?"

"Exhausting," she replied, sighing, "how was your morning?" The brown and white medicine cat sat down next to the apprentice, biting down on her mouse with a thoughtful look in her eyes.

"Pretty good," she said but she sounded out of it, like her mind was on something else. The apprentice took another bite out of her sparrow, the silence slightly awkward. Birdpaw looked up from her prey and followed the medicine cat's gaze, where it was rested on Whiskerstar. The apprentice sighed inwardly, she knew that medicine cats were not meant to have mates, and it was even worse that her mate was the leader.

"How it is going with Whiskerstar?" asked the apprentice cautiously, not sure how the medicine cat would react to her knowing about their 'relationship'. The brown and white medicine cat jumped at the apprentice's question and looked down at her with alarmed eyes.

"How did you know?" she whispered, anxiously looking around the camp to see if anybody else was listening to their conversation. Birdpaw looked down at her sparrow.

"I may have seen you and Whiskerstar when we were at the Moonpool," she said sheepishly, "I didn't mean to, I just came back from hunting... and saw you." The medicine cat sighed and looked back at her mate, who was talking to Stagleap on top of the Highrock.

"Well, I suppose there is no harm in telling you," she said, slightly talking to herself. She turned and looked down at Birdpaw. "I am expecting Whiskerstar's kits."

Chapter Twenty One

Birdpaw was not sure how to respond. Her first thought was having little Flowerstem and Whiskerstar look-alikes tumbling around camp and getting under everybody's paws. But then she remembered the battle, with all blood-shed and Whiskerstar fighting. Fear spiralled through her, but she pushed the worrying thought aside.

"Congratulations," she said to Flowerstem, who breathed out a sigh of relief.

"I was wondering how you would react," she said, her posture much more relaxed, like the news was a weight on her back, "I know it is forbidden to have a mate, let alone to have kits, when you are a medicine cat."

"Have you told anyone else yet?" asked Birdpaw. The medicine cat shook her head and took another bite out of her mouse.

"To admit," she said around the flesh, "I am a bit scared to tell Whiskerstar. I don't know how he will react. He will know that it is against the warrior code."

"He will not kick you out of the Clan," replied the apprentice, putting her tail on the medicine cat's shoulder, "you're his mate. You should tell him sooner rather than later, and don't be nervous, it will go fine."

"You're right," said Flowerstem, confidence lighting in her green eyes, "I will go talk to him now. Thank you Birdpaw." The medicine cat stood up and moved off to the Highrock, where Whiskerstar had finished his conversation with Stagleap. Birdpaw could definitely notice the slight roundness of the medicine cat's belly now that she knew of the kits. She was distracted by the thought of little kits and didn't even hear her littermate, Emberpaw, sneak up on her. She let out a startled yowl as he dug his claws into her and she flipped over, trying to dislodge him. They rolled around on the dusty camp

floor, growling as they mock battled. Birdpaw was purring between her growls, enjoying something that finally was not serious, or anything to do with her weird-power-thing. This is what she thought her life would be as an apprentice, without any power or expectation or the whole Clan's life resting on her shoulder.

But unfortunately, the fun couldn't last forever, and soon Whiskerstar came walking over to the two apprentices, his blue eyes stern and slightly angry.

"Will you two stop acting like kits?" he said, the two apprentices' instantly breaking apart at the sound of their leader's voice.

"Sorry Whiskerstar," they both mumbled, hanging their heads with embarrassment. Birdpaw felt shame prickling her pelt but she wished that the play-fight fight had gone on for a little longer. Sparkclaw looked up from where he was talking to Foxleap and padded over next to the grey tom.

"What is happening?" he asked sharply, looking down at his apprentice with a look that would have made anyone shrink in their pelt. Whiskerstar turned to the warrior.

"These two were acting like two kits," he said and Birdpaw looked over at her brother, who looked like he wished the ground would just swallow him up, "in front of the whole Clan. I was also in the middle of an important conversation when they both interrupted. It is up to you to punish your own apprentice." Sparkclaw nodded and turned his stern gaze to Emberpaw, jerking his chin before walking away. Birdpaw gave her brother a "*you can do this"* look, kind of feeling sorry for him, she would hate to have a mentor as strict at Sparkclaw. Whiskerstar watched them walk away before turning back to his own apprentice, with a stern look in his eye that made Birdpaw look up at him sheepishly.

"I expect better from you, Birdpaw," he said, "you are the most mature of all your littermates, you are not a kit anymore." The tortoiseshell and white apprentice sighed and nodded, feeling like that at some point her would mention how her powers make her special and that she should set a good example and blah blah blah.

"As your punishment," he continued, "I will be putting you on medicine cat duty, to help Flowerstem since Chiveleaf has gone gathering for more herbs before leaf-fall comes." Birdpaw nodded, not sure how it was a punishment since she and Flowerstem were good friends. "I was going to invite you on a hunting patrol but when you started acting immature, I changed my mind."

"*Never mind,"* thought Birdpaw, "*there is the punishment."*

"I will still be going on the patrol," said the leader, "and I expect a good report back from Flowerstem." The apprentice nodded again and Whiskerstar turned around, walking to the camp entrance, where Vineleaf, Honeypaw and Petalsplash were waiting. She turned around and walked into the medicine cat den, her nose instinctively wrinkling at the sharp tang of herbs.

"Hello again Birdpaw," said Flowerstem walking up from the back of the den, "I heard you got a punishment with us."

"It isn't that much of a punishment," replied the tortoiseshell and white apprentice, "except the fact that I am missing out on a hunting patrol."

"Well," came Chiveleaf's voice from the back of the den and she walked forward, "for once I am glad for you to be here. We need some extra help in here, since some she-cat has been indulging herself with too much food." The cream medicine cat glared over at her former apprentice, who curled her white and brown tail around her unborn kits.

"You might want to get started," snapped the cream medicine cat, "and you can start with cleaning out all of the herbs in the shelf."

"*This is going to be a long day,"* thought the apprentice.

Chapter Twenty Two

The one word Maplestar sent chills through Birdpaw, all the things he ever did to her rushing back in an instant. Was the battle she had seen in her vision? Flowerstem had clearly been thinking the same thing and jumped into action.

"Show us where you last saw them," said the medicine cat and Honeypaw ran to the camp entrance, with Flowerstem and Birdpaw close behind. Three warriors, Stormwind, Stripecloud and Shadeleaf, had seen Honeypaw rush into camp, and now seeing her run back out with the medicine cat clued them in that something was wrong. They ran up to the camp barrier, along with Dewpaw who had seen his sister and the seven cats rushed out of the camp and into the forest, their paws thumping on the ground. Honeypaw veered off to the left and skidded to a halt beyond a clump of bushes. There, laying in torn grass, was Petalsplash, Vineleaf and Whiskerstar, their blood staining the ground. Honeypaw cried out in alarm and Dewpaw rushed forward to her, letting his sister lean on his shoulder before she fell over.

"I shouldn't have left them," she cried, "Petalsplash told me to go get help but they needed me here more. Now they are all dead because of me."

"Nonsense," replied Dewpaw, his voice soft, "they are not dead, right Flowerstem. Flowerstem?" The brown and white she-cat was standing rooted to the ground looking down at her mate, who had a large gash in his side, and it was freely bleeding. The cream apprentice's words jerked her out of whatever thoughts she was having, and she rushed to each warrior, feeling for their pulse. Vineleaf had a torn ear and clumps of fur missing while Petalsplash had a long scratch down her back leg which was also bleeding freely.

"No," replied Flowerstem in a quiet voice, "none of them are dead, just unconscious. But we need to get them back to camp." In a slightly stronger voice, she turned to face Stormwind, Stripecloud

and Shadeleaf. "Can you three carry them on your backs?" The three littermates nodded and slowly began to load the unconscious cats onto their backs.

The trip back to camp was much slower, obviously because of the extra, injured cats, and when they reached camp, the whole Clan was gathered in the clearing. When they saw the injured cats on Stormwind, Stripecloud and Shadeleaf's backs, they broke out into a buzz of conversation. Birdpaw could barely hear any of them, her mind was too foucused on the fact that Maplestar was so close to them. Flowerstem managed to create a pathway through the crowd for Stormwind, Stripecloud and Shadeleaf, so that they could get the injured warriors into the medicine cat den. Luckily, there were already nests set up and the littermates carefully slipped the injured cats onto the moss.

Flowerstem began to flit around the den, giving Honeypaw dandelion leaves for her shock, getting out herbs from the shelves and beginning to patch up the injured cats. Every now and then, she would ask Birdpaw to fetch herbs from the shelves, using her as help since Chiveleaf was not back from gathering herbs. Birdpaw was putting marigold on Vineleaf's ear when she heard a cat stirring and looking over her shoulder to see it was Whiskerstar. Abandoning Vineleaf's ear, he padded over to Whiskerstar, joined by Flowerstem. The grey tabby tom slowly opened his eyes and drew in a wheezy breath, blinking a couple of times.

"Flowerstem?" he wheezed, looking up at the medicine cat with cloudy blue eyes.

"I am here Whiskerstar," she soothed, nudging her mate. The leader coughed weakly, and the apprentice found herself wondering how hard Maplestar must have fought to reduce their once-strong leader to this state.

"He is coming," said the tom, blinking once more before falling unconscious. Birdpaw could feel the fear radiating off the Flowerstem's pelt as the medicine cat bent down to her mate, gently nudging him on the shoulder.

"Who's coming Whiskerstar?" she asked, urgency in her voice but

she couldn't wake the tom up again. The medicine cat sat on her haunches and sighed, looking down at her paws. Birdpaw sympathized for the other she-cat and put a tail on her shoulder, both of them looking down at the unconscious leader. Something inside the apprentice made her realize that this was not the battle she had seen in her visions. The two she-cats were so lost in their thoughts that they didn't even hear Chiveleaf thundering back into camp, herbs in her mouth. Birdpaw looked up when the older medicine cat burst into the den.

"What in the name of StarClan happened here?" hissed Chiveleaf, dropping her herbs on the ground. Flowerstem looked up but Birdpaw was the one who explained at the cream medicine cat flitted around the den.

"It was Maplestar," said the apprentice, somehow managing to say his name without a shiver, "he attacked Whiskerstar's patrol. Honeypaw raced back to camp but we were not able to get there in time and found Vineleap, Petalsplash and Whiskerstar all unconscious." Chiveleaf made no sign that she had even listened or heard the apprentice, she just continued to race around the den, grabbing herbs and berries from the store and putting them next to the injured cats. Birdpaw stood in the middle of the medicine cat den, not sure if she was still needed.

"Shoo," said Chiveleaf, when she bumped into Birdpaw for about the fifth time, "you are just being a nuisance." The apprentice rolled her eyes but walked out of the den, looking over her shoulder once more at Whiskerstar before walking into the clearing, going straight to the prey pile and grabbing pigeon off the top, settling down in a shady area of camp and talking a bite.

Chapter Twenty Three

Birdpaw swallowed the last piece of pigeon and buried the bones at the roots of the tree she had been sitting under. She stood up, stretched and headed towards that camp barrier, ignoring the warriors looking at her and wondering why she was going out when there had been a recent attack. It was probably not one of her smartest ideas, but she still pushed through the ivy dangling at the camp barrier. Her paws sunk into the lush grass and birds chirped and whistled, adding to the pleasant atmosphere. There was a slight breeze blowing and it weaved its way through Birdpaw's fur, refreshing her and giving her energy for a quick sprint.

The apprentice bounded away, her paws thumping the ground and wind whistling past her ears. She loved going for runs, it cleared her mind from worrying thoughts, and it gave her an adrenaline rush. She jumped over a bushed and ran around trees, her paws nimble and light. The apprentice began to slow down from a sprint to a jog before slowing down to a calm walk just as she reached the AutumnClan border. Her breath came out in short gasps, but she enjoyed how stretched her muscles felt. Birdpaw was just about to turn back around to start racing back to camp when she saw a flash of dark ginger fur near one of the bushes. Maybe she felt a little light-head from her run, or she thought it might have been a squirrel but Birdpaw didn't think anything about it. She set off at a walk but before she would move into a jog, a deep voice spoke.

"Well, hello Birdpaw," it said, and the apprentice jumped, pinning her ears against her head, "I have missed you; you should have come to visit me sooner!" Birdpaw flattened herself to the ground as she got a whiff of Maplestar's unmissable scent. She slid out her claws and began shaking. The apprentice debated whether she should run but she probably wouldn't be able to outrun the dark ginger tom. She racked her brain for more ideas but before she could even think of one, her former leader and mentor slid out from a pair of holly bushes.

"I am not scared of you," she squeaked and cursed her kit-like voice. If anything, it just humoured the rogue, his amber eyes glimmering.

"Not scared of me?" he snarled, no humour left in his voice, "Well you should be!" Birdpaw knew he was about to leap at her and before she could question whether it was a good idea or not, she turned and ran. The ground was a blur underneath her black paws and the wind whipped past her eyes, making tears leak from them. She could hear Maplestar's paws also thudding the ground and he didn't sound far away at all. She glanced over her shoulder and saw the tom only about one or two fox-lengths behind her, but as she glanced over her shoulder and continued running, a large log loomed in her path. By the time she turned back around to actually see where she was running, there was no time to stop, and she ran full pelt into the log. Stars danced in front of her eyes as she struggled to stand up, watching Maplestar skid to a halt just in front of where she laid. He put a paw with unsheathed claws on her neck and looked fiercely over her, amber eyes menacing. The apprentice struggled under his huge paw as she tried to suck in air, but he just pushed her down further and growled.

"I will not kill you today but tell your weak Clan this. We will come next full moon so you either wilfully hand over your territory to us or if you put up a fight, you must prepare to be destroyed." He released his paw and Birdpaw wasted no time in scrambling up from the ground, leaves and twigs mattering her once clean fur. She towards SpringClan camp, not bothering to check if the dark ginger tom was following.

She pelted at full speed through the camp barrier before actually realizing that she was in camp. All the warriors in the clearing looked up at her, startled by her mattered fur and wide eyes. Birdpaw's windpipe hurt from having Maplestar's paw on it and sprinting all the way to camp. Her vision began to darken, and her head pounded.

"He is coming," she whispered before her legs buckled underneath her. The last thing she saw was Dewpaw rushing towards her and then she fainted.

Chapter Twenty Four

Slowly, very slowly, Birdpaw opened her eyes. Everything was blurry and there were mismatched shapes all over the place. She blinked a few times and the world around her slowly came into focus, making out the shapes of four different cats. One of them, who looked like Petalsplash, was laying down in a nest with cobwebs over the top of her almost healed wound. Over in one corner of the den was Whiskerstar and Flowerstem, their heads bent as they talked. Then Chiveleaf was standing over her, looking down at the apprentice.

"She is awake!" announced the cream medicine cat, causing Flowerstem and Whiskerstar to pause their 'important' conversation and rush over. The grey tabby tom crouched down at the edge of the apprentice's nest and the younger medicine cat did the same, concern alight in their eyes.

"How are you feeling?" asked the brown and white she-cat. Birdpaw swallowed a couple of times before she felt like she could form words.

"Pretty good," she rasped, her throat dry and sore. Chiveleaf padded over to the back of the den and fetched a damp piece of moss for the apprentice to drink from. She nodded her thanks and drank from the moss, relishing the cool water.

"The last thing you said before you fainted," said Whiskerstar, "was apparently 'he is coming.' What happened?" As soon as he said this, all Birdpaw's memories of what happened in the forest came rushing back to her and she repeated everything to the medicine cats and her mentor. By the time she finished her story, Whiskerstar's tabby fur was bristling and Flowerstem had her claws dug into the ground.

"We must prepare for battle," growled the leader, "because there is no way we are giving up our territory willingly." He stood up and was about to walk out of the den when his mate blocked his path,

glaring at him. The talked again in hushed voices with Chiveleaf glaring at them suspiciously, but Birdpaw didn't care. Excitement rushed through the apprentice at the thought of her very first battle, but then she sobered, knowing this battle was going to lead to death and more bloodshed then was necessary. She watched Whiskerstar walk out of the den, Flowerstem still not looking happy, but followed him out as he called a Clan meeting. Birdpaw heaved herself to her paws and, with the help from Chiveleaf, she walked out of the den and into the bright clearing just as Whiskerstar yowled.

"Cats of SpringClan, prepare for battle!"

Chapter Twenty Five

The next morning, all five apprentices woke up even before the sun had started to rise, fuelled by the excitement of preparing for their very first battle. Birdpaw was the only apprentice that wasn't excited about the battle and only woke up super early because Dewpaw and Emberpaw started play-wrestling, very loudly. The camp was a buzz of activity as dawn patrols became before-dawn patrols and cats scoffed down food before being divided up into training groups, which Stagleap organized. And then, when the before-dawn patrols arrived back at camp, the battle training began, with the clearing and hunting grounds becoming training grounds.

Birdpaw was separated into a group with her littermates, Dewpaw, Honeypaw and their mentors. Dewpaw had been given Foxleap as his temporary mentor, since Silversong was still in the nursery. Whiskerstar was not at the apprentice's training either, since he was helping to train a group of warriors. Sparkclaw unfortunately took charge of the training and was barking orders as everyone he could.

"No Windpaw, swipe then duck. Yes, better but not perfect. Birdpaw, move your legs back to get a better grip. Dewpaw, keep your claws sheathed, we don't want Foxleap to be lacerated." The ginger tom walked behind his own apprentice, criticizing the tom's moves, and Emberpaw kicked out at his mentor, most likely on purpose. Birdpaw didn't blame her brother, Sparkclaw was getting on her nerves, but the ginger warrior didn't even move and if anything, it just made him stricter.

As the day drew on and the apprentices continued training, Birdpaw felt like she was going to drop dead from exhaustion and she almost cheered when Sparkclaw announced they were done for the day, except she didn't have much energy left. They plodded back to camp and almost all of the apprentices collapsed into their nest, except Windpaw, who scoffed down a whole rabbit.

Birdpaw slept well into the afternoon and only woke up when Windpaw complained of a sore stomach and started belching.

Emberpaw and Dewpaw managed to shove him into the medicine cat den just before he puked everywhere. The she-cat emerged from the apprentice den and stretched in the sun-set light, giving herself a quick groom. Most of the warriors in camp were sleeping in the last rays of sunshine or lazily sharing tongues, only Silversong's new kits were tumbling around the camp, getting under everyone's paws. Birdpaw watched as Mistykit ran after a butterfly and jumped, her little legs not getting her very far, before she landed with a 'oomph' on the ground. Icekit nudged her back to her paws and soon they were running around again.

"Hey Birdpaw," came a voice and the apprentice looked up to see her mentor standing on her left, "I heard that you and the other apprentices worked hard in training today."

"And almost died from exhaustion," scoffed the she-cat, unable to roll her eyes as she remembered Sparkclaw's training methods, "I swear Sparkclaw was trying to kill us." Whiskerstar chuckled and looked over at the ginger warrior who was grooming a paw.

"I will tell him to take it easy next time," promised Whiskerstar, turning back to his apprentice, "but I came over here to ask you if you wanted to go hunting with me. I understand though if you are too tired from that *gruelling* training."

"No, not at all," mewed Birdpaw, leaping up with renewed energy, "I would be happy to go!" The leader's eyes glittered with amusement and he waved his tail, beckoning for this apprentice as he bounded away and through the camp barrier. She followed and soon both Clan cats were racing thought the forest, most likely scaring away all of the prey. Wind whistled through their fur and their paws thudded the ground. Running always made Birdpaw feel more alive than she actually was.

Eventually, the two cats skidded to a halt, panting from their run but adrenaline surging through them. Whiskerstar lifted his grey tabby muzzle and sniffed the air, ears pricked and eyes alert.

"There is a rabbit over there," he whispered, nodding towards a pair of tall trees, "walk quietly around the side of the trees and when I nod, scare it. I will be behind it and it should run straight into my

paws." The apprentice nodded and very quietly, she began to walk around the two trees, her heartbeat sounding like thunder in her chest. When she was close to the tree furthest away from the leader, she spotted the ginger coloured rabbit and crouched down, trying to stay as quiet as possible. She looked up at her mentor and he nodded, encouraging her to leap forward and scare the living-daylights out of their prey. The rabbit didn't even hesitate to run the opposite way from her, but this rabbit was a smart rabbit and dodged Whiskerstar's paws, causing the tom to miss completely.

"Fox-dung," cursed the leader and he pelted after the rabbit, Birdpaw following suit. They weaved in and out of trees and jumped over bushes, but the rabbit didn't manage to lose them. Whiskerstar was about to reach out and grab the rabbit when a brown shape hurtled across their path. They skidded to a halt and saw that it was Barkheart, who was very frazzled.

"Whiskerstar," panted the tom, "thank StarClan I found you. I have been looking over the whole forest for you."

"What is wrong Barkheart?" asked the grey tabby, looking around to see which way their prey had gone. The apprentice's mentor looked slightly annoyed, which was probably due to the fact that they had just lost a big rabbit that probably would have fed at least two warriors.

"It's Flowerstem," he puffed, "Maplestar has taken her."

Chapter Twenty Six

Whiskerstar bolted, a fear scent radiating powerfully off this coat, and Birdpaw spoke quickly to Barkheart, needing to go after her mentor.

"Go back to camp," she mewed hurriedly, "and get a patrol, a battle patrol. This is a battle which we need to win." The tabby tom nodded, thankfully not questioning why an apprentice was giving him orders and sprinted off to where the camp was. The she-cat spun around and ran off, following Whiskerstar's scent, which was mixed in with Flowerstem's stale scent. Slowly, the scents began to get stronger and there were more scents of other cats mixed in, most likely Maplestar's rogue followers. She passed the border and ran across unclaimed land, filled with Twoleg junk. There was an unpleasant stench, but the apprentice ignored it, too foucused on following the scent trails to where Flowerstem was, hopefully.

Eventually, she found Whiskerstar's strong scent, and she slowed down to a walk, creep cautiously between the Twoleg junk. Birdpaw pricked her ears and heard voice, familiar voices. Maplestar and Whiskerstar.

"Well," purred Maplestar, "hello Whiskerstar. Nice to see you here, we are long overdue for a catch up. What brings you here?"

"Give me back my medicine cat," growled the grey tom, "I am not in the mood for games."

"You mean your mate," corrected the rogue leader, and Birdpaw slunk forward until she could see the two toms. "I know she is expecting your kits. I don't have any need for stupid kits so I could just...finish them off now."

"Don't you dare touch them," growled Whiskerstar, sliding out his claws and digging them into the ground as he got into a battle stance. Maplestar laughed, but it was not a sweet laugh, it was full of malice and evilness. Birdpaw could feel fear radiating off her and

tried to stay calm, Barkheart should be back soon, and he would have a whole battle patrol.

"Why shouldn't I?" asked the dark ginger tom, holding up a paw and inspecting his claws, "It wouldn't be the first time I have done it." The apprentice felt bile rise up in her mouth as she thought of what her former mentor was capable of.

"You are a monster," replied Whiskerstar but Maplestar just laughed, amber eyes glinting with hostility. Bushes rustled behind Birdpaw and she turned to see Barkheart with the battle patrol. There was Stagleap, Moonflower, Vineleaf, Emberpaw, Seedspot, Windpaw, Sparkclaw, Chiveleaf, Dewpaw, Foxleap, Lilysong and Clouddrop.

"Thank you Barkheart," whispered the apprentice and the tabby tom nodded to her, with Stagleap stepping forward.

"Are you okay?" he asked, licking his daughter on her head, watching Whiskerstar and Maplestar.

"I am okay," she replied, "but I don't know how much longer Whiskerstar is going to keep Maplestar talking." Whiskerstar pricked his ears, hearing their whispers and turned around quickly to see his Clanmates. The grey tabby turned back to face the rouge traitor and flicked his tail, the SpringClan warriors scrambling into position. Maplestar narrowed his eyes at the slight noise and lowered his paw, causing rogues to trickle out from the Twoleg junk. Birdpaw took a deep breath and her mentor sprung forward.

"SpringClan, attack!"

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https://www.wattpad.com/1062298082-the-rogue-traitor-2-chosen-outcast-chapter-one. This is the next book, so please go ahead and read!